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SEPTEMBER 2008 NO. 94

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**BLT Burger with
Kicked-Up Ketchup, p. 8**



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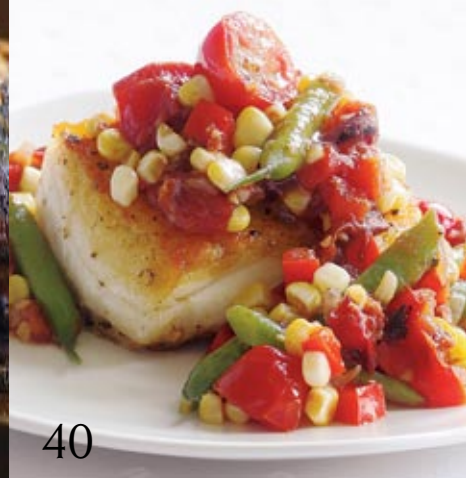
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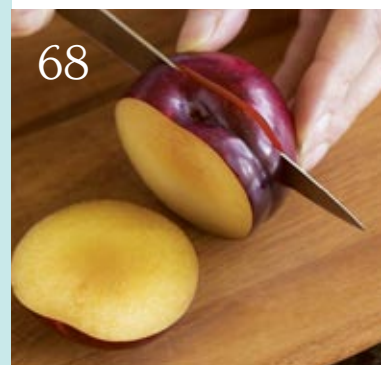
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- ◆ **QUICK**
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ **MAKE AHEAD**
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ **MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD**
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ **VEGETARIAN**
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients

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Late-Summer Meals

Six seasonal menus that mix and match the recipes in this issue



Pepper-Crusted Roast Beef with Rosemary Chimichurri

Labor Day Cookout

Farmers' Market Crudités with Buttermilk Herb Dip, *from FineCooking.com*

Pepper-Crusted Roast Beef with Rosemary Chimichurri, *p. 37*

Heirloom Cherry Tomato, Fennel & Arugula Salad with Goat Cheese Dressing, *p. 45*

Plum Tart with Lemon-Shortbread Crust, *p. 64*

To drink: A youthful, fruity Zinfandel, like the 2006 McManis Family Vineyards, California, \$14



Heirloom Cherry Tomato, Fennel & Arugula Salad with Goat Cheese Dressing



Plum Tart with Lemon-Shortbread Crust

Three Dinners on the Grill

Round out any of these dinners with a fresh fruit salad topped with vanilla ice cream or a peach and honey-cream parfait (see FineCooking.com for the recipe).

1 Grilled Vegetable Tacos with Cilantro Pesto, *p. 60*

Mexican Black Bean Burgers with Tomatillo & Avocado Salsa, *p. 51*

To drink: A spicy Shiraz, like the 2005 Peter Lehmann Shiraz, Barossa, \$20

2 Grilled Lamb Chops with Fresh Herb & Feta Salad, *p. 82a*

Green Salad with Figs & Pancetta, *p. 23*

To drink: A bright, youthful Malbec from Argentina, like the 2006 Altos Las Hormigas, Mendoza, \$14

3 Honey-Barbecued Chicken, *p. 38*

Smoked Heirloom Tomato Relish with Corn & Beans, *p. 44*

To drink: A savory Rhone-style blend, like the 2005 Penfolds Bin 2 Shiraz-Mourvèdre, South Australia, \$16

Weekend Lunches

Summer Vegetable Soup with Dill, *p. 82a*

Niçoise Salad with Grilled Tuna & Potatoes, *p. 54*

To drink: A bright, crisp rosé, like the 2007 A to Z rosé, Oregon, \$13

Fig and Manchego Crostini, *p. 23*

Pan-Seared Salmon with Plum-Cucumber Salad, *p. 82a*

To drink: A supple, fruity Pinot Noir, like the 2006 Beringer Founders' Estate Pinot Noir, California, \$12

from the editor

The Heat Is On

I'm not one of those cooks who thinks that late summer is a good time to get out of the kitchen. Too hot to cook? I don't think so. I spend a good chunk of the other 10 months of the year trying to remember what vine-ripened tomatoes and just-picked (as opposed to just-flown-in-from-Chile) plums taste like. And then



they're here, along with fresh corn, zucchini, basil, red peppers, watermelon, figs, and more. No way am I stepping away from the stove, heat or no heat. (Isn't that what pools/oceans/rivers/lakes are for?)

This is flip-flop, tank-top cooking. Get to your local farmers' market early in the morning, before it's too hot to shop, and go a little wild. Buy what looks good; buy too much of everything you know will be gone in a few short weeks. Lug it all home and then open this issue. Aaah. So many ideas for what to do with your bounty.

Consider the tomato. We've got the all-you-need guide to the different heirlooms you may come across, from Lemon Boys to White Beauties (keep an eye out for Green Zebras and Brandywines, two of my favorites). Then put them to work in chef Eric Rupert's wonderful recipes, including a stacked tomato salad (a riff on the stacked pastry layers in a Napoleon) with Parmesan crisps and tender herbs.

As for those plums, it's not so much about the variety (there are something like 200 kinds, ranging from red to yellow to black) as it is about ripeness. You want firm-ripe fruit that is neither supersoft nor rock hard but somewhere in between. Then put them to good use in a gorgeous tart with a cookie-like shortbread crust, an amazing coffee cake with a spiced, brown sugar streusel, and shortcakes with caramelized plums, which take just minutes but taste like the essence of summer.

Celebrate salad season with three all-time favorites (Cobb, Caesar, and Niçoise) in versions fresh and new (example: Niçoise with grilled tuna and potatoes). Add crusty bread, a glass of Albariño, and dinner's done.

Once I've used up the bulk of my farmers' market haul, I start thinking about my other top summer food: burgers. Sure, I make them throughout the year, but do they ever taste better than they do right now? Consider this issue's cover—one of the most delicious examples of a classic burger ever to grace these pages. The secret? A tart and spicy ketchup that comes together in minutes (recipe at right). We've also got a new take on burgers from the legendary John Ash, who wonders just how important the bun is in the makeup of the burger. Not very, as it turns out, when the results are as innovative as his Middle Eastern Turkey Burgers with Cucumber & Yogurt Sauce.

I *will* leave the kitchen if there's fire and smoke involved—as in barbecue. Tony Rosenfeld shows us how to grill-roast larger cuts like pork loin, whole chicken, and beef loin. It's all about a fast and hot sear (for that irresistible browned crust) and then a low and slow finish.

That's just a taste (pun intended) of all the issue has to offer. If you, like me, think this is no time to stop cooking, then join us. It's getting hot in here.

—Laurie Buckle, editor
fb@taunton.com

Kicked-Up Ketchup

Yields about ¾ cup.

Sweet caramelized onions and southwestern spices transform ordinary ketchup into something special. Use it to build a burger that speaks to you (for our BLT burger on the cover we added bacon, lettuce, avocado, tomato, and cheddar).

1 Tbs. canola oil
1 small yellow onion, quartered and thinly sliced crosswise
1 Tbs. cider vinegar
½ cup ketchup, preferably Heinz or Del Monte
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
¼ tsp. ancho chile powder
¼ tsp. ground cumin
Pinch ground cinnamon
Pinch ground cloves
Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a medium sauce pan over medium-low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned and very soft, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the vinegar and scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the ketchup, red pepper flakes, chile powder, cumin, cinnamon, cloves, several grinds of black pepper, and ¼ cup water. Simmer for 5 minutes to thicken slightly and meld the flavors. The ketchup keeps for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator; serve at room temperature.

—recipe by Allison Ehri Kreidler



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from our readers

Welcome to the new editor

Dear Laurie, I want to thank you for a nice introductory letter (June/July, *Fine Cooking* #93). It made me want to sit down with you and talk about cooking. I really liked the issue's cover—that wonderful-looking blueberry crisp. Here in Arkansas, we'll soon pick blueberries, and I look forward to trying those delicious-sounding recipes.

—Marjorie Johnson,
Eureka Springs, Arkansas

A fix for angel food

I just served "A Cure for Spring Fever," the entertaining menu from your April/May issue (*Fine Cooking* #92). It was a great menu, and everything tasted outstanding. The angel food cake fell, however, despite my best efforts to follow the directions precisely. It tasted good, but I didn't want to serve it, so I made a last-minute substitution. Would using a wooden skewer to test the cake for doneness cause it to fall? Or perhaps I beat the egg whites too long? I followed the time indications for the recipe, but the whites were definitely too stiff to pour, as the recipe directs. Any thoughts on why the cake fell?

—Sandy Riedel,
San Diego, California

Editors' reply: Sorry to hear your angel food cake fell. As long as you weren't checking with the skewer too early, before the cake had a chance to set, the skewer probably wasn't the culprit. It seems likely that you did beat the whites too long. The time listed in the recipe for beating the whites is merely

a guideline, and your whites may have whipped up faster than ours did, perhaps because your mixer has a little more oomph than ours does. The peaks should have been soft and droopy, not at all stiff. If you want to try the cake again, just pay attention to what the whites are doing and don't worry about how long it takes. You'll also want to be as gentle as you can when folding in the flour mixture.

One other thought: You didn't mention whether you cooled the cake upside down. If you didn't, then that's another possible reason it fell.

Finding the recipes you need

A shelf near my kitchen is piled with several years of *Fine Cooking*. But to locate a recipe is all but impossible. I need an index. Is there one?

—H.S. Leavitt,
Laguna Beach, California

Editors' reply: Yes, there is. You can search our online index at Finecooking.com (just click on the magazine tab and then click on "magazine index"). We also publish an annual recipe index, which includes all of the year's recipes—look for it in our December/January issue.

A love of cooking—and comics

Being an obsessive home cook, I have spent many a day cooking from recipes in your magazine and using techniques I learned from your articles. I illustrate these experiences in comic-strip format (see below). You can see more on my Web site at Alifeinscribbles.blogspot.com.

—Laura Williams, via e-mail ♦



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Getting the most from our recipes

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How to follow a recipe

- ❖ Before you start, read the recipe from start to finish so there are no surprises.
- ❖ Before actually starting to cook or bake, gather all the necessary ingredients and equipment. Prepare the ingredients according to the directions in the ingredient list (see "Watch those modifiers" at right for more on this).
- ❖ For determining doneness, always rely first on the recipe's sensory descriptor, such as "cook until golden brown." Consider any times given in a recipe merely as a guide for when to start checking for doneness.

Ingredients

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- ❖ butter is unsalted
- ❖ eggs are large (about 2 ounces each)
- ❖ flour is unbleached all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to)
- ❖ sugar is white granulated
- ❖ fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried
- ❖ garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.

Use the right measuring cup

To measure flour or other dry ingredients, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measuring cup and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Be sure to measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.

Watch those modifiers

A recipe ingredient list contains words such as "diced" and "chopped" that tell you how to prepare each ingredient for the recipe, but what you may not realize is that the placement of these "preparation modifiers" in the ingredient line is as important as the modifier itself. Take, for example, the following two similar lines that you may see in a recipe ingredient list:

1 cup rice, cooked

1 cup cooked rice

The first line is telling you to take 1 cup of rice and cook it; the second line is calling for 1 cup of rice that has already been cooked. The difference between the two is about 2 cups of cooked rice, and that can make a big difference in the outcome of a recipe.

A pint isn't necessarily a pound

Don't confuse fluid ounces with ounces. Fluid ounces are a measure of volume; ounces are a measure of weight. For example, 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of honey weighs 12 ounces. The only time you can be positive that fluid ounces and ounces are equal is when you're measuring water.



Tony Rosenfeld (“Grilling Big,” p. 34) says, “One of my formative grilling experiences was the day, many years ago, when I had to grill vegetables for a banquet of a thousand people at a country club. It took me about six hours, and I almost passed out from the summer heat and smoky fumes. I promised myself I’d learn how to do it better.” These days, Tony is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking* and the chef and co-owner of several Boston restaurants, including b.good and Dinner Trends.

As corporate chef at the Madison, Wisconsin, headquarters of Sub-Zero and Wolf Appliance Company, **Eric Rupert** (“Heirloom Tomatoes,” p. 40) oversees a large culinary training facility where he instructs chefs on his company’s appliances. He previously worked at several restaurants in Madison, including Ovens of Brittany, The Madison Club, and L’Etoile, where he taught seasonal cooking classes.



Sue Torres



Eric Rupert



Kimberly Masibay

Frequent *Fine Cooking* contributor **John Ash** (“Burgers,” p. 46) has a passion for great burgers. In fact, he likes to get down to the meat of the matter by serving his burgers—whether they’re beef, turkey, tuna, or veggie—without buns and with tasty sauces on the side. The founder and chef of John Ash & Co. restaurant, John teaches wine and cooking classes around the world and has written three cookbooks. His latest, *John Ash: Cooking One on One*, received a James Beard award in 2005.

Susie Middleton (“Salads,” p. 52) is passionate about all things green and edible. The former editor of *Fine Cooking*, Susie has written dozens of articles

about vegetables and is currently writing a vegetable side dish cookbook. When she’s not cooking or writing, Susie volunteers for Island Grown Initiative, a nonprofit organization that supports local farmers and sustainable farming practices on Martha’s Vineyard. She’s also a regular contributor to *Fine Cooking*’s “Farm to Fork” blog. Susie is a member of the Institute of Culinary Education’s Alumni Hall of Achievement and is editor at large for *Fine Cooking*.

Half Puerto Rican and half Italian, Long Island-born **Sue Torres** (“Mexican Small Plates,” p. 58) didn’t start cooking Mexican food until her first stint as a chef. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Sue worked at several French restaurants in Manhattan before landing the top position at the Mexican eatery Rocking Horse. She put her heart and soul into research and travel to Mexico, learning all she could about the cuisine. The result is her own style of fresh, modern Mexican food with international influences, which she now showcases at her own Manhattan restaurants, Sueños and Los Dados.

Contributing editor **Kimberly Y. Masibay** (“Plum Desserts,” p. 62) fell in love with plums when she worked as a pastry apprentice in Germany. In her article, she shares her favorite plum desserts, some of which are riffs on classic German cakes she used to bake. Besides training as a pastry chef, Kimberly studied journalism at Columbia University and worked as a newspaper reporter and magazine editor in New York before joining the *Fine Cooking* team. ♦



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How (and why) to eat local

What exactly does “eating local” mean?

—Sharon Richardson,
Southern Pines, North Carolina

“Local” can mean anything from your county or immediate area to your state or region. People eat local for different reasons. For some, it’s about food safety: Reducing the number of steps from farm to table makes it possible to see and talk to a local grower, a transparency not available with a faceless distant agribusiness. Many of us eat local because it keeps us in touch with the seasons, tastes better, and means that we might get varieties of fruits and vegetables that

don’t ship well. And a lot of us eat local because we think it leaves a lighter footprint on the planet, saving energy because the food doesn’t have to travel as far. Eating locally grown food is also a way to keep our money within our communities, by supporting local growers instead of far-off farms. It’s not an all-or-nothing venture—every local purchase helps.



Find more on eating local on our Farm to Fork blog at finecooking.com

I’ve decided I want to try to eat local, but I don’t know how to start.

—Amy Hoopers,
Newburgh, New York

Visiting a farmers’ market in your area is a good place to begin. You’ll see what’s available locally and be able to talk directly with growers. Start with five foods you can buy locally, such as apples, root vegetables, lettuce, herbs, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and cheese. Sometimes it’s impossible to find a food that’s com-

pletely locally sourced. If this is the case, buy from a local producer. It’s great to support local bakers, coffee roasters, jelly makers, and confectioners, too.

Are there any resources to help me eat local?

—Dan Beers,
Winnipeg, Manitoba

You can find local farmers’ markets at apps.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets. At Localharvest.org, type in your zip code and find farms, markets, sustainable restaurants, stores, and meat sources.

Sustainabletable.org suggests questions to ask store managers, farmers, and waiters and a dictionary of terms surrounding the eat local movement. There are also links to Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, sites. CSA farms sell individuals a portion of the crop before it’s planted and then distribute a portion of the harvest all season long. Once you decide to eat local, you’ll treasure ingredient-driven cookbooks. I love *Madhur Jaffrey’s World Vegetarian*, Elizabeth Schneider’s *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*, and *The Victory Garden Cookbook*, by Marian Morash.

If I have to choose between a food that’s organic and one that’s local, which should I buy?

—Allison Sanderson,
Sacramento, California

The ideal choice is local *and* organic. After that, I choose locally grown foods over large-corpora-

Jennifer Maiser is the editor of Eatlocalchallenge.com, a place to share experiences sourcing locally grown and produced food. The San Francisco resident is a founder of the Locavores, a group of thousands who have pledged to eat local.

tion organic. The issue is complex because although organic certification guarantees fewer pesticides in the environment, not all small growers can afford to comply with USDA regulations to earn the organic label. As a result, some produce not labeled organic is grown with just as much (or even more) care. By buying local, you can cut out the middleman and ask the grower how your food was grown and produced. Buying food that is either local or organic is a step in the right direction. ♦

Local bites

- ❖ The average ingredient in the United States travels 1,200 miles to get to the dinner table.
- ❖ Eating locally is a nationwide phenomenon. “Locavore” was chosen as the 2007 Word of the Year by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*. A locavore is a person who believes in buying foods locally.
- ❖ Canning, pickling, dehydrating, and juicing fruits and vegetables in their growing seasons is a way to get through the winter when fresh produce isn’t available locally. Also, many areas are now starting winter farmers’ markets.

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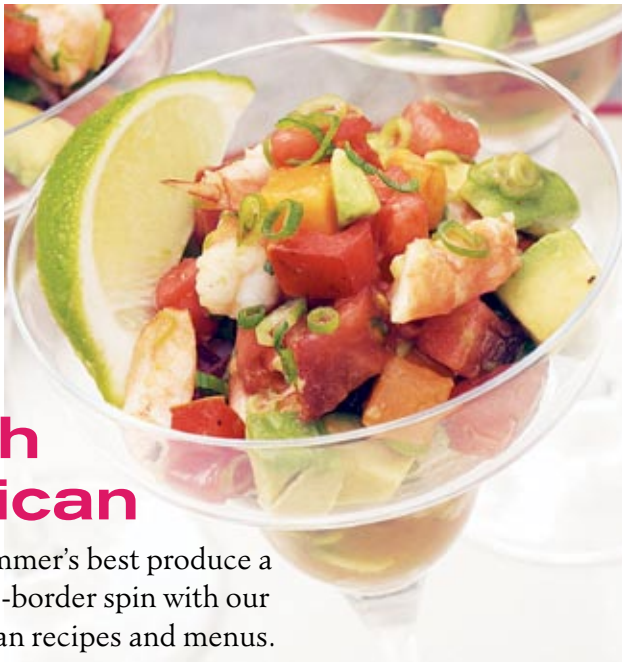
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Fresh Mexican

Give the summer's best produce a south-of-the-border spin with our fresh Mexican recipes and menus.

Ice Cream Social

Find recipes for from-scratch ice creams, scrumptious toppings, and breezy frozen desserts, plus a look at ice cream tools, our favorite brands, and much more.



web-only feature: Fruit on Fire

Grilling guru Elizabeth Karmel shares her secrets for cooking peaches, pineapple, mangos and bananas over an open flame, including four recipes for savory salsas, sides, and fabulous desserts.



tell us what you think

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Blueberry Streusel Bars with Lemon-Cream Filling

By Nicole Rees

★★★★★ (Based on 3 ratings)

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RECIPE

Always a hit at summer picnics, these addictive squares strike the perfect balance between tart and sweet and chewy and crunchy.

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RATINGS & REVIEWS

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Great Finds

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

Cooling pitcher

This sturdy stainless-steel and glass pitcher is fitted with a cooling insert; just fill it with ice, snap it into the lid, and cover the pitcher. Because the ice stays contained, it won't dilute your drink when it melts. *WMF Chill-It pitcher, \$120 at Amazon.com.*

Picnic backpack

Forget the basket and take along this stylish backpack instead; it comes with four place settings of neatly stored flatware, glasses, and plates. *Sagaform canvas picnic bag, \$80 at Scandinaviandetails.com (800-928-4010).*

Carafe and tumblers

Because they're made from recycled wine bottles, these carafe sets and tumblers by designers Emma Woffenden and Tord Boontje are all slightly different one-of-a-kind pieces. *Artecnic TranSglass set of four tumblers, \$61, and carafe set, \$66, at Re-modern.com (650-692-2152).*





Olive oil drizzlers

Available in several jewel-toned colors, these bottles have a clever flexible spout; just press to control the flow of olive oil or vinaigrette. *Typhoon USA flow-control drizzlers, \$15 at Amazon.com/typhoon.*



Melamine tableware

Melamine is everywhere this season, but this is some of the most elegant we've seen. The tree-branch design comes from an early "Sleeping Beauty" sketch. *Kingswell decorated tableware from the Walt Disney Signature Tabletop Collection by Zak Designs, \$5 to \$15 per piece at Laprimashops.com (866-983-7467).* ♦



Napkin dispenser

No need to worry about paper napkins blowing away; this handy dispenser keeps them secure with its hinged lid and spring-activated base. *Cuisipro Quick-Grab napkin dispenser, \$22 at Cookware.com (888-478-4606).*

Wild Blueberry Chutney

BY LAURA GIANNATEMPO

The twisting, uphill road to Molly Sholes's Spruce Mountain Blueberries farm near West Rockport, Maine, ends abruptly, making way for a dirt road that appears to lead to nowhere. But if you keep going a little farther, you'll come upon a beautiful old yellow farmhouse perched atop a hill overlooking nearly forty acres of blueberry fields. You'll also see a curious Calderesque blueberry statue in the front yard and a couple of pickup trucks with "chutney" license plates. These are the unmistakable signs that you've arrived.

When I visited the farm on a warm, sunny August morning, Molly and her business partner, Paulette Martin, were busy making Spruce Mountain Blueberries' signature blueberry chutney in the farm's kitchen. The chutney is both sweet and tart and deliciously spiced with ginger and garam masala, an Indian blend of ground and toasted spices.

The inspiration for the chutney came from the almost twenty years Molly spent in Pakistan and India, following her husband's diplomatic career. She fell in love with the local cuisine, learned to distinguish the nuances of

each region's food, and most important, she learned to toast and grind her own garam masala. When she returned to the United States, she was eager to combine her passion for Indian flavors with another long-time passion: Maine blueberries. Making blueberry chutney seemed the obvious solution. She and her husband bought the farm in Maine and the rest came easily.

Molly makes her own garam masala and uses fresh ginger and wild, hand-picked blueberries from the farm. She sells the chutney—which comes plain or with almonds and raisins—to local stores and online and also supplies nearby restaurants with her juicy fresh blueberries. *For more information, visit Sprucemtnblueberries.com or call 207-236-3538.* ♦





At Spruce
Mountain
Blueberries,
in Maine, wild
blueberries are
harvested every
day in July and
August.

Figs

BY RUTH LIVELY

I didn't start out loving fresh figs. Like most fig fearers, I used to be put off by their texture—soft, yielding, what some would call squishy. But one taste of the sweet, honeyed deliciousness of a ripe fig turned me around.

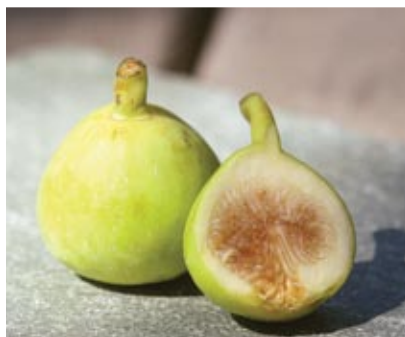
Fresh figs have two seasons: a short one in early summer and a main crop running from late summer through fall. Which variety is available locally depends on where you live; not all varieties grow well in all areas. Because ripe figs are fragile and don't travel or keep well, you're better off buying tree-ripened figs available locally rather than looking for a specific variety.

Choosing ripe figs isn't a matter of color, which varies among types. Instead, look for fruits that are heavy for their size and soft, yielding to gentle pressure. A ripe fig can be plump, but often the best ones are a little shrunken and wrinkled, possibly

showing cracks in the skin. Look for a distinct bend at the stem. Avoid fruits that are very firm or overly squishy or that show signs of milky sap at the stem. And look carefully for signs of mold, the biggest enemy of ripe figs.

To keep figs in top form, watch them carefully and use them within a day or two. I like to set them on a plate on the counter, leaving space around each fig for air to circulate. Having them out in full view reminds me to use them and to check them frequently for mold (I turn them at each inspection so they rest on a different spot). Those with juices oozing should be eaten quickly. If you find mold, scrape it away with the tip of a knife, rinse the fruit, pat it dry, and use it pronto. Figs will last a little longer in the fridge, but I don't think chilling improves them, so I avoid it.

Native to the Mediterranean, figs can be cultivated anywhere winter lows don't drop much below 20°F. But not all types grow equally well in all areas. At right are some of the more widely available varieties.



Kadota is less sweet than some and has light-green skin and few seeds.



Calimyrna is large, with golden skin, pinkish-white flesh, and a nutty flavor.



Black Mission is very sweet and has blackish-purple skin and pink flesh.



Brown Turkey is large, with maroon skin and mild flavor.

The raw and the cooked

Perfectly ripe figs are amazing eaten out of hand, but I also like to use them in very simple preparations, some raw and others cooked.

Figs with lemony mascarpone and honey

Figs topped with lemon-scented mascarpone (at right) are a delicious and easy dessert. Stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mascarpone, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. finely grated lemon zest, a few drops of lemon juice, and a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg. Cut 12 figs (enough for six people), in half lengthwise and top each with a scant teaspoon of the filling and a drizzle of honey.

Prosciutto-wrapped figs

Wrap whole or halved figs in strips of paper-thin prosciutto for a simple starter.

Fig and manchego crostini

Coarsely chop fresh figs and toss with balsamic vinegar and kosher salt or fleur de sel (about $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. vinegar and a small pinch of salt per fig). Brush slices of baguette or ciabatta with olive oil, toast under a broiler, and top with thin slices of manchego, allowing it to melt a bit. Top each crostini with some of the chopped figs. Serve warm.

Green salad with figs and pancetta

Toss salad greens with a shallot vinaigrette made with fruity olive oil and balsamic vinegar for sweetness and sherry vinegar for zip. Arrange the salad on plates, top with a few fig quarters, cubes of sautéed pancetta, and some crumbled toasted walnuts or pecans. Finish with shavings of Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Fig and cheese platter

For an easy dessert, pass a platter of perfectly ripe fig halves, whole toasted almonds or pecan or walnut halves, and cheeses such as Parmigiano-Reggiano, dry Jack, aged Gruyère, manchego, or a creamy blue.

Bacon-wrapped figs

Make a fast appetizer by wrapping halved figs in thin-sliced bacon (half a slice per fig) and securing with a toothpick. Broil until the fat is rendered, the bacon crisp, and the fig hot.

Grilled cheese-stuffed figs

Make this vegetarian starter by cutting figs about halfway up from the bottom, stuffing with a morsel of Gorgonzola or Stilton, and gently pressing closed. Brush or spray the figs lightly with olive oil and grill just until they're hot.

Fig coulis

Purée fresh figs with balsamic vinegar, a little olive oil, and salt and pepper. Add enough water to create a pourable consistency. Serve with poultry or pork.

Fig focaccia

Top raw dough with a little crumbled goat cheese and cover with sliced figs. Sprinkle with brown sugar, add a scattering of fennel seeds, and drizzle with olive oil. Bake until browned.

Sautéed figs

For a simple but sophisticated dessert, melt butter and a little honey in a skillet. Sauté fig halves cut side down just until blistered and slightly browned. Finish with a squeeze of orange juice or a tablespoon of sweet wine and drizzle with the pan sauce.

Fig compote

Poach whole or halved figs in a lightly spiced syrup just until tender. Use a 1 to 2 ratio of sugar and liquid (water and wine or fruit juice), plus seasonings. Try rosemary sprigs, strips of orange zest, and a cinnamon stick; or the zest and juice of a lemon, half a vanilla bean, and either star anise or cardamom pods. Make the syrup first, then poach the figs. Remove the figs after a few minutes and then add back after the syrup is cool, so the figs don't get overly soft.

Figs with
lemon-scented
mascarpone



Figs and...

Whether used in sweet or savory dishes, figs are great with a wide range of partners. It's hard to go wrong if you pair figs with items grown or produced in areas where figs grow, such as:

Nuts All kinds.

Citrus and vinegars, particularly lemon, orange, grapefruit; and balsamic, red-wine, and sherry vinegars.

Honey, wines, and spirits Both dry and sweet wines, brandy, rum, port, and sherry.

Cured meats Ham, pancetta, bacon.

Pungent aromatics Anchovies, capers, olives, garlic.

Spices and herbs Warm spices like cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, and star anise; mint, rosemary, thyme, and lavender.

Dairy Butter, cream, mascarpone, crème fraîche, and cheeses of all kinds. Figs with blue cheese is an outrageously good combination, but also try Parmigiano-Reggiano, ricotta salata, aged goat cheeses, and firm, tangy sheep's milk cheeses.

Ruth Lively trained at La Varenne in France and was senior editor at Kitchen Gardener. ♦

what's new

Salad gets a new spin

We love the one-handed operation of this Smart Touch salad spinner from Zyliss. You pump the lever to spin the basket, and a rubber base keeps the spinner from moving on the counter. There's a stop button and a lock that holds the lever down, giving the spinner a flat top that allows stacking. Take out the basket and the thick plastic bowl is stylish enough for serving. It comes in three colors (green, white, and orange) and two sizes: \$30 for the large, which holds four to six servings, and \$25 for the small, which holds two to three servings. It's sold at Amazon.com.



Speed under pressure

Besides the fear factor of exploding stews, one of the deterrents to using pressure cookers is their size—at 8 quarts or more, they tend to get pulled out of the cabinet for family-size braises, but not everyday cooking. This Pressure Pan from Fissler changed the way we think about pressure cookers. At 4.2 quarts and 10.2 inches in diameter, it behaves more like a deep skillet, but with a pressure cooker lid, it cooks faster and is more energy efficient than traditional cookware. And it comes up to pressure faster than a large pot. We loved how it perfectly braised chicken thighs in 15 minutes and made easy work of risotto. Besides the pan and pressure lid, the \$255 set includes a glass lid (to use the pan as a high-sided skillet) and a steamer/fryer basket. You can find it at Amazon.com.



Don't grill on fumes

Ever have the nightmare of running out of propane gas with a deck full of guests? This little gadget can save the party. The GasWatch propane-level indicator screws onto the connection between the propane tank and the grill's regulator and works like a car's gas gauge. When the dial hits red, you have about 15 minutes of propane left. It can also detect leaks in the gas connection. The device costs \$20 at Ace Hardware and True Value stores. An electronic model that sounds an alarm when you enter the yellow zone is \$30.



trend: the four-door fridge

Three major appliance companies have introduced four-door refrigerators in the past six months. The refrigerators all combine a French-door fridge on top with a two-drawer freezer on the bottom. The idea of splitting up the freezer makes sense, when you think about stashing longer-term storage items like whole turkeys

in the bottom drawer and more frequently used items like bags of frozen vegetables or ice in the top. In most models, you give up a bit of storage capacity for the four-door configuration over a standard two-door. But the convenience might be worth it. Here's the scoop on the new models:



Liebherr 2062 Series

Width: 36 inches

Fridge capacity: 19.5 cubic feet

Freezer capacity: 6 cubic feet

Price: \$5,000

Cool feature: Ice maker stores up to 7 pounds of ice

More info:

www.Liebherr-Appliances.com

GE Profile Armoire models

Widths: 31 and 35 inches

Fridge capacity: 14.6 and 17.4 cubic feet

Freezer capacity: 6.1 and 7.5 cubic feet

Price: \$2,900 and \$2,800

Cool feature: Color LCD controls

More info: GEappliances.com



LG LMC25981

Width: 35³/₄ inches

Fridge capacity: 17.6 cubic feet

Freezer capacity: 7.1 cubic feet

Price: \$3,000

Cool feature: Tall ice and water dispenser in door with slide-out pitcher rest

More info: Us.lge.com



test drive

Grilling Baskets

BY NICKI PENDLETON WOOD

Every cook who's ever driven herself crazy dashing between the grill and the stove has wondered, What does it take to cook an entire meal outside?

It takes the right tool, and a grill basket or wok can go a long way toward bringing smaller or delicate foods out of the kitchen and onto the grill, without the worry of small pieces falling through the grate. To be worthwhile, a basket or wok must tame the flame, let in the smoky flavor, and make it easy to toss or stir items to keep them from overcooking.

The grill basket category can be confusing, because similar-looking items are called baskets, or woks, or grill skillets. We focused on perforated pans with raised sides and open tops that allow you to shake or flip cut-up vegetables, pieces of meat, or shrimp—food you might otherwise skewer.

We tested a range of shallow-sided perforated pans in round, square, and rectangular versions, some with long handles like a skillet's. Materials included stainless steel, porcelain-enamelled nonstick surfacing, other nonstick coatings, and cast iron.

(continued on p. 28)



What to look for

- ❖ Grill baskets need to stand up to high, direct temperatures; look for sturdy construction and hefty weight.
- ❖ If easy cleanup is a priority, nonstick finishes surpass stainless, which takes real scrubbing to keep clean (although most stainless can go in the dishwasher).
- ❖ Porcelain enamel tends to be tougher than other nonstick coatings. Although we couldn't test longevity, we did eliminate any nonstick baskets that showed undue flaking or chipping.
- ❖ Holes shouldn't be so big that slices of onions or other slim veggies fall through, and they need to be well formed and smooth so jagged edges or slits don't trap food.
- ❖ Sides should be high enough to accommodate abundant vegetables and permit shaking as well as stirring.



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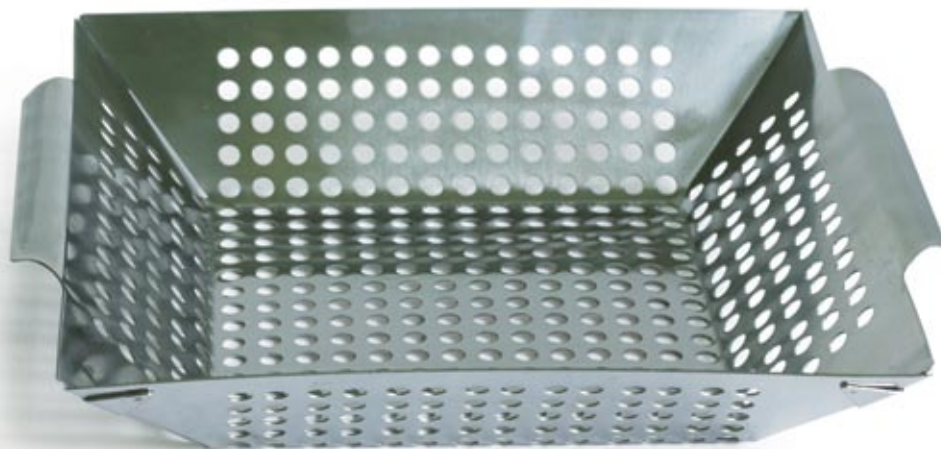
Grilling Baskets: **top picks**



Outset copper-color nonstick grill wok

\$25, ChefTools.com

The perforated rounded sides on this wok allow heat to circulate evenly and make it easy to stir or toss vegetables and shrimp. The wok, which despite appearances is not made of copper but steel sprayed with a copper-colored porcelain-enamel nonstick coating, heats a little slowly. But the mellower heat means you don't need to constantly stir vegetables, and the pan was slow to overcook even shrimp. The surface area of the bottom is smaller than that of the square woks, an issue if you want to grill fish fillets. The looped metal handles stayed cooler than those on the other woks and allow for hanging storage.



Mr. Bar-B-Q's Platinum Prestige Premium stainless-steel grilling wok

\$16, Amazon.com

The heavy steel and solid construction of this 12-inch-square wok made it our favorite among the stainless versions. The rolled handles made transporting it, especially with oven mitts, a bit awkward, but they took up less room on the grill. The thick body delivered a predictable heat, which means better-controlled cooking for vegetables and shrimp. But the stainless material proved less forgiving than nonstick-coated woks, especially when used over high heat. The tradeoff for the durability of stainless is that you can't close the grill and walk away, or you'll get veggies charred on the outside and raw inside.



Charcoal Companion nonstick square wok

\$15, [Amazon.com](#)

Charcoal Companion makes a comprehensive line of grill woks and baskets, and though each model has different strengths, this 12-inch-square version was the overall favorite for even heat distribution and versatility. The steel pan conducts heat well for a combination grill/stir-fry effect, and it feels substantial. Its sides are slightly higher than Mr. Bar-B-Q's, and it has the same rolled metal handles, which are a little hard to grab with mitts. But as with the Mr. Bar-B-Q, it sits compactly on the grill. It cooked cheese polenta with minimal sticking, and cleanup with a plastic scrubber was quick.



Charcoal Companion's cast-iron grill wok

\$32, [4thegrill.com](#)

This cast-iron grill wok deserves special mention. It behaved very differently from all the other woks and baskets tested, yet we grew to love its performance. Square, coated with enamel on the outside, and preseasoned, this wok is nearly three times thicker than the steel or aluminum woks. It heats more slowly than the other metals tested but distributes heat so well that we could leave vegetables on the grill for up to 5 minutes without a worry, and even shrimp didn't burn on high heat. Fish turned out moist, and vegetables skidded around easily when stirred and cooked nicely, even over high heat. Cleanup was reasonably easy, too. With the extra weight (more than 8 lb.), it's not the easiest to maneuver. But if you're a fan of cast-iron cooking, you might want to consider this option.

How we tested

We tried 16 baskets and woks in side-by-side tests over a gas grill supplemented with wood chips. We roasted a pile of cut vegetables, shell-on marinated shrimp, fish fillets, and chilled squares of cheese polenta to assess evenness of heat distribution, browning, placement and size of holes, comfort of handles, ease of use, and cleanup.

Nicki Pendleton Wood is a cookbook editor in Nashville, Tennessee. ♦

The Spirit of Summer

Remember gin?

A key player in some of the season's most refreshing cocktails is back.

BY ST. JOHN FRIZELL

In his classic 1940s cocktail book *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks*, David Embury wrote, "Of all the liquors in the world, gin is probably the most misunderstood, the most maligned, the most abused." He claimed that the bad reputation gin acquired during Prohibition was as undeserved as it was hard to shake. Postwar drinkers in America remembered gin as something gangsters made in bathtubs. But before Prohibition, gin was a colossus of the spirits world, and its popularity straddled the globe.

Today, gin's glory days may be returning. Gin is almost single-handedly driving the recent resurgence of cocktail culture. It's on the menu of every self-respecting cocktail bar from New York to San Francisco, more so than vodka, rum, whiskey, or tequila. And there may be more gins on the market now (and in more styles) than at any other time since Prohibition.

What exactly is gin? Though gin purists may cringe when they hear it, gin is essentially a type of flavored vodka. Distillers start with a neutral grain spirit (like vodka) and add the herbs, spices, roots, berries, and seeds that give gin its flavor. The exact combination of ingredients varies from brand to brand, but it often includes lemon and orange zest; garden herbs like rosemary, savory, and fennel; spices like coriander, caraway, and nutmeg; and, most important, juniper berries, which give traditional gins their signature flavor, reminiscent of pine sap and evergreen needles.

Balancing the flavors of these botanicals is the gin-maker's art, and none of the flavors is harder to work with than juniper. In the best traditional gins, the juniper flavor gives the liquor a woody structure for other flavors to build on and provides a wild note, like a breath of mountain air. But a little too much and gin takes on a medicinal, soapy flavor—think Pine-Sol instead of pine forest.

Deftly blended, though, gin's refreshing herbal flavors find a natural home in summer cocktails. So with the season's outdoor parties in mind, it's time to get gin out of the bathtub, dress it in a crisp linen suit, and give it another look.

Styles of gin

The two main gin types you'll find in stores are the traditional London dry gin and a new lighter, fruitier style of gin with a less prominent juniper flavor. What this means is that there are enough gins these days to suit almost anyone's palate, so taste a few to find one that belongs in your liquor cabinet.

London Dry Gins

These gins were created in 19th-century Great Britain as an alternative to the heavy, malty Holland gins (called *genevers*) and the sweetened Old Tom gins that were readily available at the time. Today crisp, snappy London dry gins are by far the most common type. They're perfect for classic cocktails like the gin martini, gin and tonic, and Tom Collins (see recipe at far right), among others.

Bottles to try:

Tanqueray (\$21 for 750 ml)

The warhorse of London dries, this gin has a sturdy juniper backbone with overtones of coriander and lemon peel and a strong and long finish with hints of anise. Excellent mixed with citrus.

Beefeater (\$19 for 750 ml)

Bright orange and lemon peel flavors dominate this gin, while clove, cinnamon, and juniper come in behind, ending on a gentle peppermint note. Its strong citrus flavors mix with almost anything.

Plymouth (\$26 for 750 ml)

A little sweeter and smoother than the other dry gins, it has chewy black currant and licorice flavors that combine with lemon and evergreen. Makes a killer martini.

New-Generation Gins

Some contemporary distilleries are giving less importance to juniper berries and have shifted their focus to gin's other botanicals, allowing the citrus, floral, and spice flavors to push the juniper out of the spotlight (or in some cases, out of the bottle altogether). Bombay Sapphire wasn't the first brand to do this, but its success in the late 1980s and early 1990s paved the way for many other lighter-style gins. These are ideal for newfangled cocktails like the Watermelon Gin Punch at right, although many bartenders now use them in traditional gin cocktails to lure gin naysayers back into the fold.

Bottles to try:

Bombay Sapphire (\$24 for 750 ml)

Though the label says London dry, this gin's toned-down juniper, floral notes, and mild spice have little in common with, say, Tanqueray.

Hendrick's (\$35 for 750 ml)

Like a tea party, Hendrick's is full of cucumber and watercress; rosemary and faint juniper flavors fill it out, and pepper and clove provide a little spice.

Martin Miller's (\$35 for 750 ml)

This gin is a mouthful of violet candy and dried lavender, with hints of fennel seed and fresh, green herbs.

Gin cocktails

Unlike whiskey or brandy, gin is never drunk straight or at room temperature; its flavors can be a little overpowering when undiluted or unchilled. But add just a little dry vermouth, chill it over ice, and voilà: the most famous cocktail ever, the martini.

The martini and the gin and tonic may be classics, but there are many more gin drinks you can mix up. Here's a take on another classic, the Tom Collins, and a refreshing pitcher drink concocted with mint and watermelon juice—just the thing for summer.

Watermelon Gin Punch

Serves eight.

One-half small round seedless watermelon (about 3½ lb.), peeled and cut into large chunks

½ cup fresh lemon juice, strained

½ cup simple syrup (see directions below)

8 sprigs fresh mint; more for garnish

2 cups Hendrick's gin

Working in batches if necessary, purée the watermelon in a blender or food processor and press the purée through a strainer. You'll need about 4 cups of juice—it's fine if there's some pulp in the juice. Chill.

Put the lemon juice, simple syrup, and mint in a 3-quart serving pitcher or a punch bowl and mash the mint thoroughly with a muddler or the back of a wooden spoon. Add about 4 cups of ice, the gin, and the watermelon juice and stir.

Serve in rocks glasses over ice. Garnish with mint sprigs.

How to make simple syrup

Simple syrup is the base for many a cocktail. If you have leftover syrup, store it in the fridge for up to a month.

In a small saucepan, mix 1 cup granulated sugar with 1 cup water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved. Immediately remove from the heat and let cool. Yields about 1½ cups.

Tom Collins

Serves one.

Order this cool classic at a bar and you'll likely get a glassful of commercial sour mix, which will give the drink a chemical aftertaste; make it at home with fresh lemon juice and it's hard to beat.

¼ cup Tanqueray gin or other

London dry gin

2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

2 Tbs. simple syrup (see directions below left)

½ cup soda water

One orange slice, for garnish

One maraschino or fresh cherry, for garnish

Shake the gin, lemon juice, syrup, and four or five ice cubes in a cocktail shaker. Strain over ice into a Collins glass, top with the soda, and stir. Garnish with the orange slice and cherry.



St. John Frizell is a freelance writer and bartender based in Brooklyn, New York. ♦



Winning tip

Easy-to-roll cracker dough

I love the Seeded Crackers recipe in the December 2007 issue (*Fine Cooking* #89), but I had trouble achieving an even thickness when I rolled out the cracker dough by hand. The second time I made them, I ran the dough through a pasta machine, with great results. The dough easily rolled through the machine and baked into crisp, evenly browned crackers.

—Bob Chester, Markham, Ontario

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips. We'll pay for the ones we publish, and we'll give a prize for the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email fctips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner:
Emile Henry flame-top brazier;
retail value, \$140.



Slicing bagels safely

To keep my fingers safe from the sharp serrated edge of my bread knife when cutting bagels, I like to use a pair of tongs to hold the bagel in place while I slice through the center with my other hand.

—Genevieve Jaskiewicz,
Stoney Creek, Ontario

Brown bag blotter

Brown paper grocery bags are so handy in the kitchen. I like to use them as blotters when peeling potatoes or hard-boiled eggs, for cutting juicy fruit, for handling raw meat and fish, and for draining fried foods. After I'm finished with my task, if the bag's not too messy, I recycle it or just roll it up and throw it away—no mess and no waste.

—Linda Tarin, Redding, California

Proper cheese storage

I like to have a good selection of cheese in my kitchen at all times, but I found that much of it would get moldy before we could enjoy it. I've discovered that wrapping the cheese in waxed paper, instead of plastic wrap, allows it to "breathe" and discourages mold, thus doubling the shelf-life of my cheeses.

—Renée Johnson, Chico, California

Chopping canned tomatoes with a spatula

Instead of using kitchen shears to cut canned tomatoes right in the can, I like to use a sturdy, straight-ended stainless-steel spatula. Using careful, steady movements, I plunge the spatula through the tomatoes until they're chopped. The spatula cuts all the way to the bottom of the can without having to remove each layer of tomatoes as they are chopped. Works well every time.

—Cat Freshwater,
Rockaway Beach, Oregon

Storing plastic bags in plain view

Plastic produce bags are always in high demand in my kitchen, and I like to keep them handy. Instead of cluttering a drawer with a wad of plastic bags, I store them in a beautiful ceramic pitcher right on the countertop. The pitcher is heavy and has a tapered top, so the bags stay inside and pull out one at a time. Best of all, it gives me a chance to enjoy a pitcher that I otherwise don't use very often.

—Anne Anderson, Lompoc, California



Alternative egg trough

In a past issue of *Fine Cooking*, I read about a kitchen makeover where the contractor cut a small trough for eggs in the granite countertop so they could come to room temperature without rolling off. I loved this idea and while looking around my kitchen for a substitute trough, I noticed my four-slot toaster. It's perfect—the eggs rest on top of the bread slots and come up to room temperature safe and sound.

—Joan Bjorness, Syracuse, New York

Brine and defrost at the same time

Whenever I have frozen meat that I want to brine, I put the meat in a resealable plastic freezer bag with the brine while it's still frozen. The salt in the brine helps defrost the meat quickly, and the flavor begins to penetrate right away. This works best for thinner pieces of meat, such as pork chops, steaks, and chicken parts.

—Jennifer Mach, Chicago



Caramelized onions on hand

I love caramelized onions on everything from pizza to omelets, but they take too long to cook for everyday use. So I slice and caramelize a few pounds of onions, portion them into 1/4-cup "nests" on a baking sheet, and freeze them until solid. Then I transfer them to a freezer bag for storage. It takes less than a minute to reheat them in the microwave, and they're ready to use.

—Anne Fitzgerald, Northfield, Minnesota

No-mess squeezing

When I make tzatziki, I cover my cutting board with a thin dishtowel and grate the cucumber directly onto the cloth. When I've grated enough, I gather the corners of the towel, scooping all the grated cucumber into the center. I then twist the towel and squeeze out the moisture. That done, the cucumber is easily dropped into a bowl, ready to mix with the yogurt and other ingredients. This method can also be used for grated zucchini and potatoes.

—June Robertson, via email

Easy cleaning for poached egg pans

I make poached eggs almost every morning for breakfast and used to find the pot very difficult to clean afterwards, because the egg whites would stick to the pan. Thinking back to biochemistry class, I remembered that bleach breaks down proteins, like those found in egg whites. Problem solved: Now I soak the poaching pot in a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water while I eat my breakfast. The cooked-on egg whites wipe off easily.

—Marla Pollard, Stratford, Prince Edward Island

TOO GOOD TO FORGET

From *Fine Cooking* #18

Separating dried fruit

When baking with sticky items like raisins and dried fruits, I roll the pieces in my hands with just a dab of flour before baking. This separates the pieces and keeps them from bunching together in the batter, making more uniform cookies and cakes. The small bit of flour that's on the fruit disappears during baking.

—Myrna Fox,

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida ♦





Spice-Rubbed Pork with Jalapeño-Lime Salsa



Grilling Big

You don't need
an oven to cook
these large roasts—
just head for the
barbecue

BY TONY ROSENFELD

A few years back, I wrote an article on sear-roasting (*Fine Cooking* #71, April/May 2005), a classic restaurant technique for searing meat or fish on the stovetop and then roasting it in the oven until just done. It's one of my favorite methods and is easily adapted to the home kitchen. And it's only natural that after a couple of summers of outdoor cooking, I've adapted this formula to the grill.

Why grill-roast?

Your basic one-flip, high-heat grilling technique works best for small, quick-cooking cuts of meat—think burgers or chicken breasts. Larger cuts—like pork loins, beef roasts, and whole chickens—have traditionally been saved for the oven for fear of burning on the grill. But by searing them over high heat and then pushing them to a cool zone on the grill to roast, these cuts cook gently and evenly. That's because the covered grill acts almost like an oven, with the hot air circulating around the meat. Plus, the meat picks up an extra layer of smoky flavor it wouldn't get in the oven. This method also lets you cook a meal

for a crowd out on the patio instead of inside a steamy kitchen.

Sear, then go low and slow

The initial sear on the gas grill or the hottest part of the charcoal fire gives the meat a nice browned crust. Then lower the heat and continue to cook the meat slowly. On a gas grill, this means turning off a burner; on a charcoal grill, move the meat to a cool area. Cover the grill so the heat inside runs about 350°F and then check the meat every so often and make sure the fire holds steady.

When I grill-roast, I add more flavor to the meat in two ways: with a wet spice rub and a flavorful finishing sauce. In the recipes that follow I've included a vibrant jalapeño-lime salsa for the pork, a tangy barbecue sauce for the chicken, and a garlicky, herby chimichurri for the beef. And because these roasts feed between four and eight people, they're perfect for summer parties. So light up the grill, invite some friends, and get ready to impress with a new technique—and delicious results.

Grill-Roasting in 4 Easy Steps

1. Season

Apply the spice rub as directed in the recipe.



2. Prepare the grill

Heat all burners of a gas grill to medium low or prepare a charcoal fire with a hot zone and a cooler zone by pushing all the coals to one side of the grill. An oven thermometer resting on the grill grate (over the hot zone of the charcoal fire) should register about 450°F with the lid down, or you should be able to hold your hand a couple of inches above the grill for 3 or 4 seconds. If it's hotter than this, lower the burners slightly or let the coals cook down. Brush the grill grates with a stiff wire brush and then wipe with a lightly oiled wad of paper towels.

3. Sear

Set the meat on the grill (over the hot zone of the charcoal fire), cover, and cook until it's nicely browned and easily releases from the grates, 5 to 10 minutes. Watch carefully during this stage and if a flare-up occurs, move the meat away from the flames until they die down. If necessary, squirt the flames with a little water to quench them.



4. Grill-roast

For a three-burner gas grill, turn the middle burner off and set the front and back burners to medium low. For a two-burner grill, turn the back burner off and set the front burner on high.

Move the meat to the cooler zone of the grill—an oven thermometer set on the cooler part of the grill (with the lid down) should register about 350°F—cover, and cook until done to your liking. If using a charcoal grill, check on the fire occasionally; it may be necessary to add fresh charcoal as the fire dies down. Allow the meat to rest for 5 to 10 minutes before carving and serving with the sauce or glaze.





Pepper-Crusted Roast Beef with Rosemary Chimichurri

Serves six to eight.

New York strip steaks come from the beef loin, which is why the cut is sometimes called a strip loin roast.

2 Tbs. olive oil
2½ tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
2½ tsp. kosher salt
1½ tsp. coarsely ground black pepper
1 clove garlic, minced
3 lb. boneless beef top loin roast, fat trimmed to ¼ inch
1 recipe Rosemary Chimichurri (at right)

Season the beef In a small bowl, mash the oil, rosemary, salt, pepper, and garlic with the back of a spoon. Rub all over the beef and refrigerate for at least 12 and up to 24 hours.

Prepare the grill as described opposite. While the grill heats, prepare the Rosemary Chimichurri below.

Sear the beef fat side down as directed opposite.

Grill-roast Flip the beef and grill-roast as directed opposite, checking on the grill temperature every 10 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat registers 130°F for medium rare, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let cool for 10 minutes. Thinly slice and serve with the chimichurri.

rosemary chimichurri

Yields about ¾ cup.

Chimichurri is a tangy garlic and parsley sauce that accompanies grilled beef at Argentine steakhouses. It often contains

a touch of oregano, too, but I like to give the sauce a little twist by using rosemary instead.

¼ cup grapeseed or canola oil
1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
3 Tbs. white-wine vinegar
1 Tbs. minced garlic, mashed to a paste
½ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil and rosemary in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the rosemary is aromatic, about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes. In a medium bowl, whisk the vinegar and garlic. Whisk in the rosemary oil and ¼ cup water. Then stir in the parsley, ¾ tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. black pepper. Season to taste with more salt and pepper.



Spice-Rubbed Pork Loin with Jalapeño-Lime Salsa

Serves six.

Make sure your butcher removes the chine bone so this loin can be cut into chops after grilling.

2 Tbs. olive oil
1 Tbs. kosher salt
2 tsp. sweet paprika, preferably Hungarian
2 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. granulated sugar
½ tsp. chipotle chile powder
2 cloves garlic, minced
6-rib bone-in pork loin roast (4 to 5 lb.), chine bone removed, trimmed of excess fat
1 recipe Jalapeño-Lime Salsa (at right)

Season the pork In a small bowl, mix the olive oil, salt, paprika, cumin, sugar, chipotle powder, and garlic. Rub all over the pork and refrigerate, covered, for at least 12 and up to 48 hours.

Prepare the grill as described on p. 36. While the grill heats, prepare the Jalapeño-Lime Salsa at right.

Sear the pork meat side down as directed on p. 36.

Grill-roast Flip the pork and grill-roast as directed on p. 36, checking the grill temperature every 15 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat registers 145°F,

1 to 1¼ hours. Transfer to a cutting board and let cool for 10 minutes. Slice into chops by cutting between the bones and serve the chops with the salsa.

jalapeño-lime salsa

Yields 1¾ cup.

Because the piquancy of fresh jalapeños can vary, I like to add some jarred pickled jalapeños for a little more oomph and a tanginess that goes well with the pork.

1½ cups seeded and finely diced ripe tomato (about 2 medium)
⅓ cup chopped fresh cilantro
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
3 Tbs. finely diced red onion
1 fresh jalapeño, cored, seeded, and minced
1 Tbs. finely chopped pickled jalapeño slices; more to taste
1½ Tbs. freshly squeezed lime juice; more to taste
1 tsp. finely grated lightly packed lime zest
Kosher salt

In a large bowl, mix the tomato, cilantro, oil, onion, fresh and pickled jalapeños, lime juice, lime zest, and 1 tsp. salt. Season to taste with more pickled jalapeño, lime juice, and salt. Let sit at room temperature while you grill-roast the pork.

Honey-Barbecued Chicken

Serves four.

This chicken gets a double dose of flavor: It's rubbed with an intense spice paste and then basted with a tangy honey glaze on the grill.

2 Tbs. olive oil
2½ tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. sweet paprika, preferably Hungarian
1 tsp. light brown sugar
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
¾ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
¼ tsp. chipotle chile powder
1 clove garlic, minced
4-lb. chicken, butterflied (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68), patted dry
1 recipe Honey Glaze (below)

Season the chicken In a small bowl, mix the olive oil, salt, chili powder, paprika, brown sugar, thyme, black pepper, chipotle powder, and garlic. Rub all over the chicken and between the breast meat and skin. Cover and refrigerate for up to 24 hours or let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Prepare the honey glaze below. Set aside ¼ cup of the glaze for drizzling over the cooked chicken.

Prepare the grill as described on p. 36. **Sear** the chicken skin side down as directed on p. 36, until the skin browns but does not burn. Keep a close eye on the chicken in case a flare-up occurs.

Grill-roast Flip the chicken and move to the cooler side of the fire or adjust the burners as described on p. 36. Brush the bird with some of the glaze and grill-roast, brushing with the glaze every 5 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thighs registers 165° to 170°F, about 30 minutes. Let rest on a cutting board for 5 minutes. Carve and serve drizzled with the reserved glaze.

honey glaze

Yields about ½ cup.

¼ cup honey
1 Tbs. soy sauce
1 Tbs. ketchup
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. cider vinegar
½ to 1 tsp. Asian chile paste, like Sriracha

In a small bowl, mix all the ingredients. Set aside ¼ cup of the glaze for drizzling over the cooked chicken. (The glaze may be made up to 3 days ahead.)

See the author
 grill-roast a chicken at
finecooking.com/extras

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor. ♦



Honey-Barbecued Chicken

heirloom tomatoes

There's nothing quite like a tomato for unlocking memories. We all have a recollection of the best tomato we've ever tasted. I remember following my great-grandfather, salt shaker in hand, between the towering staked tomato plants in his backyard garden in northern Indiana. He would break open a ripe ruby globe, salt it, and hand me half. Nothing has ever tasted better.

Heirlooms are the tomatoes of memories like these. They're grown from seeds that are pollinated naturally and handed down from year to year. Unlike commercial hybrid tomatoes, which are engineered for durability and uniform color and shape at the expense of taste, heirlooms are all about variety and richness of flavor, color, shape, and texture. They offer a way back to that time when tomatoes were seen only a few months of the year, were rarely perfectly round or red—and tasted of summer itself.

They're everything supermarket tomatoes wish they could be—juicy, intense, and full of flavor

BY ERIC RUPERT



red currant
tomatoes

Good to know

The heirlooms available in supermarkets aren't necessarily grown locally. Check their origin—the farther they travel, the less flavor they'll have. It's worth going out of your way for the taste of a just-picked tomato from a farm-stand or farmers' market.



Tomato how-tos

Buy

Never mind their looks:

Heirlooms are often misshapen and mottled, but this has no bearing on taste. And don't be put off by cracked skins, as long as they aren't leaking juice.

Go for heft: Pick one up—it should feel heavy for its size.

Take a whiff: Ripe heirlooms will have an earthy, green scent; avoid those that smell musty.

Store

Treat gently: Don't pile them in a bag; the weight of one will squash another.

Don't refrigerate: Temperatures colder than 50°F will destroy their flavor and texture.

Flavor: a color key

With heirlooms, the color is an indicator of flavor, be it sweet or tart. Here's a guide to taste and texture, by color:

Red or pink varieties offer a balance of acid and sweetness that tastes closest to what is thought of as the classic tomato flavor. Brandywine is the heirloom you'll see the most often because it's the hardiest and travels best. Roma-shaped varieties, such as Opalka, are meaty, with low seed counts, making them good for sauces or pastes.

Yellow and orange varieties, such as Lemon Boy, are the lowest in acid of the heirloom tomatoes, with a mild, sweet flavor. The Garden Peach has an unusual fuzzy skin and a sweet, fruity flavor.

Purple or black heirlooms usually appear more deep maroon or brown, like Cherokee Purple and Carbon. Most have a smoky-sweet flavor and are more acidic than the yellow or green varieties.

White varieties, like White Beauty, tend to have a yellow tinge and a slightly lower acid content than red heirlooms. Their much higher sugar content makes them the sweetest of the heirlooms.

Green varieties, such as Green Zebra, are lower in acid than red ones, with a flavor both sweet and tart.

Cherry tomato heirlooms, such as Sugary, Fond Mini, Red Currant, and Mirabel, are very sweet and juicy. They add nice textural variety when used whole in salads or dishes alongside sliced larger heirlooms.

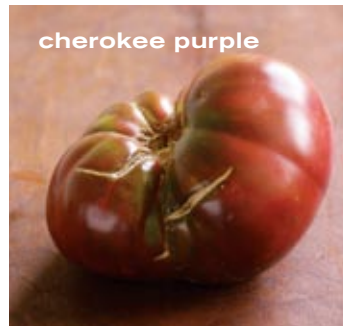
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sugary



cherokee purple



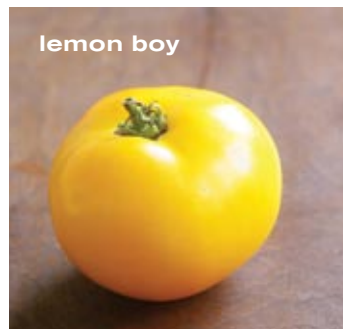
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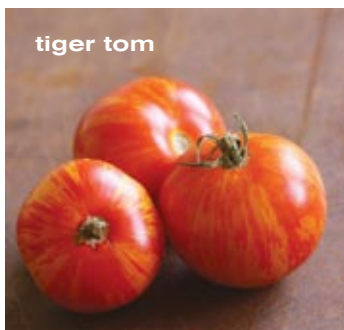
austin's red pear
& yellow pear



lemon boy



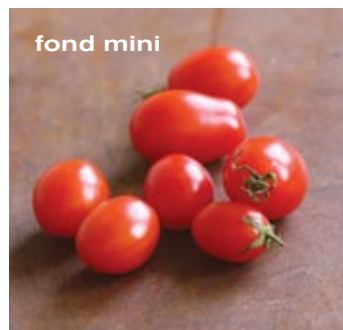
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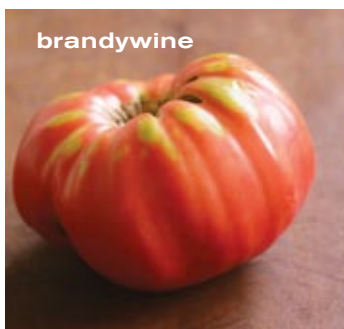
opalka



fond mini



brandywine



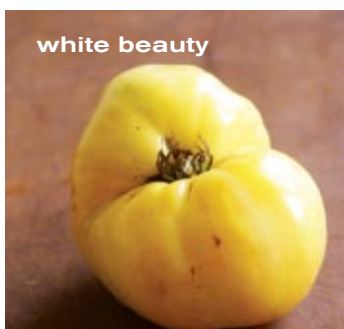
garden peach



chocolate cherry



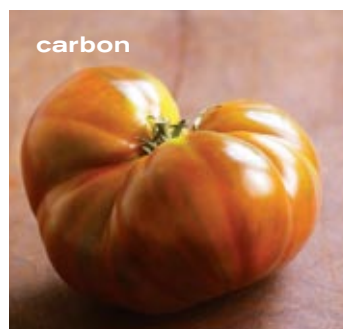
white beauty



mirabel



carbon





Heirloom Tomato Napoleon with Parmesan Crisps & Herb Salad

Serves four.

Here's an impressive and delicious way to show off a variety of colors and styles of heirloom tomatoes.

FOR THE PARMESAN CRISPS:
2½ cups grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:
1 small shallot, minced
(about 1½ Tbs.)
4 tsp. Champagne vinegar
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs. grapeseed oil or canola oil

1 cup baby arugula leaves
1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn into bite-size pieces if large
½ cup fresh tarragon leaves
½ cup 1-inch-long fresh chive pieces
20 small nasturtium leaves (optional)
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Sixteen ⅓-inch-thick heirloom tomato slices, preferably of different colors, sizes, and shapes (2 to 3 lb.)
About 20 various heirloom cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered

Make the parmesan crisps:
 Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat it to 375°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with a nonstick baking liner or parchment. Spread the grated cheese over the entire surface of the liner. Bake until the cheese is amber brown, about 18 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool. Break into irregular pieces (each about 3 inches across). You'll need 12 pieces for the Napoleons, but this batch makes extra to cover the inevitable breaking (and snacking).

Make the vinaigrette: Put the shallot, vinegar, mustard, and a pinch each of salt and pepper in a small bowl or dressing cruet. Allow the shallots to sit in the vinegar for

at least 20 minutes and up to 1 hour. Whisk or shake in both oils. Season to taste with more salt and pepper.

To serve: In a large bowl, mix the arugula, parsley, basil, tarragon, chives, and nasturtium leaves (if using). Lightly dress with some of the vinaigrette. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Divide the salad evenly among 4 salad plates. Arrange a large tomato slice on each salad, sprinkle lightly with salt, and top with a piece of parmesan crisp. Continue to alternate the lightly salted tomatoes and cheese pieces until you have used 3 pieces of the parmesan crisp in each Napoleon. Finish off the top of each Napoleon with an unsalted tomato slice. Arrange the cherry tomatoes around the Napoleons and drizzle any remaining vinaigrette around the plates. Sprinkle everything with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.



Smoked Heirloom Tomato Relish with Corn & Beans

Yields about 5 cups; serves six as a side dish.

Hot-smoking the tomatoes allows them to pick up the smoky flavor of the wood chips. Serve with grilled shrimp or over grilled fish, meat, or chicken.

FOR THE SMOKED TOMATOES:
2 cups hickory, mesquite, cherry, or apple wood chips, soaked in water for at least 1 hour
Vegetable oil for the grill
2 lb. heirloom Roma-style (plum) tomatoes, cored, halved lengthwise, and seeded

Kosher salt
4 oz. thin green beans, trimmed and cut into 1- to 2-inch lengths
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 small red onion, cut into small dice (scant 1¼ cup)
One-half large red pepper, cut into small dice (scant ¾ cup)
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1¼ cups fresh corn kernels (from about 2 ears)
1 pint heirloom cherry tomatoes, halved (or quartered if large)
Freshly ground black pepper

Smoke the tomatoes: Drain the wood chips well. Prepare a hot charcoal fire. When the fire is hot, arrange the coals in an even layer. Sprinkle the wood chips over the coals and put the grill grate in place. Scrub the grate clean with a wire brush and oil the grate with a folded paper towel dipped in vegetable oil.

Arrange the tomato halves cut side down on the grill. Cover the grill and open all the air vents. Smoke the tomatoes until they're soft and their skins are light brown in spots, about 15 minutes.

Using potholders, remove the entire grill grate with the tomatoes on it to a clean heat-proof spot (a large sheet of aluminum foil on a stone patio, for instance) and let cool for 5 to 10 minutes. With tongs or a spatula, transfer the tomatoes to a cutting board. Cut the tomatoes into ½-inch dice and put in a bowl along with any juices from the cutting board. (The tomatoes may be smoked up to 4 hours ahead.)

Finish the relish: Bring a 3- to 4-quart saucepan full of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the green beans and boil until barely tender, about 4 minutes. Drain the beans in a colander, rinse with cold water to stop the cooking, and set aside.

Set the saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil, onion, and red pepper and cook until soft and aromatic, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until the garlic no longer smells raw, about 2 minutes. Add the corn and a big pinch of salt and cook until the color brightens and the kernels look translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the green beans, the cherry tomatoes, and the smoked tomatoes with their juices. Season with salt and pepper and simmer until the cherry tomatoes look a little wilted, 1 to 2 minutes.

Cooking heirlooms intensifies their flavor. Choose meaty varieties with thicker skins, which will soak up the other flavors in the recipe.

Find a bonus heirloom tomato recipe at finecooking.com/extras

Easy ways to showcase heirlooms

Caprese salad Slice different color heirlooms and alternate with slices of fresh mozzarella. Sprinkle with extra-virgin olive oil and torn fresh basil.

No-cook pasta sauce Seed and dice a variety of heirlooms and mix with extra-virgin olive oil, chopped fresh thyme, parsley, minced garlic, salt, and freshly ground black pepper. Let sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and then toss with just-cooked pasta.

Chunky salsa Seed and dice an assortment of heirlooms and mix with finely chopped red onion, chopped cilantro, extra-virgin olive oil, a squeeze of fresh lime juice, minced garlic, finely chopped jalapeño or serrano chile, salt, and freshly ground black pepper.

Bread salad Dice an assortment of heirlooms and toss with diced English cucumber, diced red bell pepper, and cubes of stale country bread. Dress with a vinaigrette of red-wine vinegar, extra-virgin olive oil, salt, freshly ground pepper, and torn fresh basil.

Heirloom Cherry Tomato, Fennel & Arugula Salad with Goat Cheese Dressing

Serves four.

The tart goat cheese dressing and crisp fennel elevate this simple tossed salad.

2 oz. soft goat cheese, at room temperature
1/3 cup buttermilk
2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. mayonnaise
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. thinly sliced chives
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 lb. baby arugula leaves
1 large or 2 small bulbs fennel, stalks trimmed, outer layer removed, and cored
1 pint various heirloom cherry tomatoes, cut in half (or substitute 3 medium heirloom tomatoes cut into bite-size pieces, about 2 cups)

In a food processor, blend the goat cheese, buttermilk, 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, mayonnaise, and lemon juice until smooth. Transfer to a medium bowl and stir in the chives. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Put the arugula in a large bowl. Using a mandoline set at a very thin setting or a vegetable peeler, shave the fennel and add to the arugula. Toss with enough of the dressing to just coat the salad. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the salad among 4 large salad plates and mound slightly. Toss the tomatoes in a bowl with the remaining 1 tsp. olive oil and a little salt and pepper; scatter on the salads. Serve immediately, passing the remaining dressing at the table.

Eric Rupert is executive chef at Sub-Zero and Wolf Appliance in Madison, Wisconsin. ♦





Fresh Tuna Burgers
with Ginger & Cilantro



Burger revolution

Forget the buns and ketchup—
think beef, turkey, tuna, and veggie burgers
with unexpected ingredients and bold sauces

BY JOHN ASH

In recent years, burgers have evolved from fast food fixes to high-end entrées. Top chefs are adding exotic ingredients of all kinds to their burgers—foie gras, braised short ribs, beef cheeks, even truffles. I'm sure these gussied-up versions are delicious, but I confess to liking mine simpler. In fact, there are times when a burger is so flavorful, so juicy, and so good on its own—or served with a savory sauce—that I find even the bun unnecessary. You might call the idea revolutionary, but give these burgers a try and I bet you'll agree.

What's great about the burgers on the following pages is that each one—beef, turkey, fresh tuna, and black bean (for my vegetarian friends)—has its own flavor inspiration. I stuff my beef burger with creamy blue cheese and season the black bean burger with Mexican flavors like poblano chile and ground cumin. Then I top them with zesty sauces, like a Thai-style dipping sauce with lime juice and spicy chiles for the fresh tuna burger and a cool cucumber and yogurt sauce for the turkey burger.

I can't insist that you eat your burger without a bun, so if you want to, go ahead and serve them on buns, but trust me: These are tasty enough to stand on their own.

shop right

For superior burgers, the old axiom that “fat is flavor” really applies. The ground meat, be it beef or turkey, needs the right proportion of fat to keep the burgers juicy but not greasy.

For beef burgers, go with ground chuck (80% to 85% lean).

For turkey burgers, ground turkey that has both light and dark meat is best (93% lean).

Seek out a butcher who will grind your meat to order, because the fresher the meat, the better the burger.

take it easy

The more you handle ground meat, the tougher your burgers will be, so be gentle.

Mix in seasonings with a light hand, and gently but firmly form the patties.

Wetting your hands helps the meat come together quickly and keeps your hands from getting sticky.

When you cook the burgers, flip them only once and never press down on the meat with your spatula. You want to keep the flavorful juices inside the burgers, not spilled out onto the grill or in your skillet.

Fresh Tuna Burgers with Ginger & Cilantro

Serves four.

The key to a good tuna burger is to avoid overprocessing and overcooking. Cook them on the stovetop so you have better heat control and can ensure that they stay a nice, moist medium rare inside.

1 lb. fresh sushi-grade tuna fillet
2 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbs. finely chopped red onion or scallion
2 Tbs. mayonnaise
1 tsp. minced fresh ginger
½ tsp. minced fresh hot green or red chile, such as cayenne, Thai bird, or serrano
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. canola oil
Thai-Style Dipping Sauce (recipe below)

With a very sharp knife, cut the tuna into ¼-inch dice. Alternatively, cut the tuna into 1-inch chunks and pulse in a food processor until just chopped, about 4 quick pulses—take care not to overprocess. Gently stir in the cilantro, onion, mayonnaise, ginger, chile, ¾ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Shape the tuna into 4 equal 1-inch-thick patties. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 20 minutes and up to 4 hours.

Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the tuna burgers until nicely browned on both sides but still pink in the center, 2 to 4 minutes total. Don't overcook or the burgers will be dry.

Serve with the Thai-Style Dipping Sauce.

thai-style dipping sauce

Yields about ½ cup.

Inspired by the Thai tradition of serving dipping sauces with meals, this salty, sweet, tart, and spicy sauce is utterly delicious. It's also fantastic with grilled fish fillets or pork.

¼ cup fresh lime juice
2½ Tbs. sugar
2 Tbs. fish sauce
1½ tsp. rice vinegar
1½ tsp. coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
1 tsp. minced garlic
½ tsp. minced fresh hot red or green chile, such as cayenne, Thai bird, or serrano

Combine all the ingredients in a small bowl and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Let stand at least 30 minutes before serving to let the flavors develop and blend.

Stuffed Blue Cheese Burgers

Serves four.

A good way to tell if these burgers are cooked to your liking—without cutting into them to peek—is to watch how the meat cooks on the sides. When the raw pink color first disappears you know they're still rare in the middle; a couple of minutes after that they should reach medium rare.

1½ lb. ground 80% to 85% lean beef, preferably chuck
2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 oz. crumbled creamy blue cheese, such as Point Reyes Farmstead Original Blue
Red Wine Pan Sauce (recipe at right)

Gently break the meat into large pieces in a large bowl. Add the Worcestershire sauce, 1 tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. pepper and gently mix with your hands; avoid overworking.

Wet your hands and shape the meat into 8 equal ½-inch-thick patties. Make a slight indentation in the center of 4 of the patties to hold the cheese. Divide the blue cheese into 4 equal portions, shape into disks, and set a disk in each of the 4 indentations. Top the cheese with the remaining patties and gently but firmly seal the edges to completely encase the cheese. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 20 minutes and up to 4 hours.

Prepare a hot charcoal or gas grill fire. Grill the burgers, covered with vents open, until nicely marked and cooked to your liking (2 minutes per side for rare, 3 minutes per side for

medium rare, 4 minutes per side for medium). Don't press on the burgers while they're cooking—you want to keep the juices and cheese inside the burger, not on your grill.

Serve with the Red Wine Pan Sauce.

red wine pan sauce

Yields about ⅔ cup.

4 Tbs. unsalted butter
¼ cup finely chopped shallots
1 cup lower-salt beef or chicken broth
¾ cup red wine
1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
2 tsp. Dijon mustard, preferably grainy
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a medium sauté pan, heat 1 Tbs. of the butter over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until softened but not brown, about 2 minutes. Add the broth, wine, vinegar, and mustard. Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil until reduced to ½ cup, about 9 minutes.

Off the heat, whisk in the remaining 3 Tbs. butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve warm.

Find menus for all four burgers at
[finecooking.com/extras](https://www.finecooking.com/extras)



Stuffed Blue Cheese Burger



Middle Eastern Turkey Burgers

Serves four.

1½ lb. ground turkey, preferably including some dark meat (93% lean)
2 medium cloves garlic
Kosher salt
¼ cup lightly packed chopped fresh mint
¼ cup lightly packed chopped fresh parsley
2 Tbs. olive oil
2 tsp. sweet paprika
1 tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. ground coriander
¼ tsp. cayenne
Cucumber & Yogurt Sauce (recipe below)

Gently break the meat into large pieces in a large bowl. Mince the garlic, sprinkle with 1½ tsp. salt, and using the flat side of a chef's knife, smear and mash to a paste. Gently mix the garlic paste, mint, parsley, olive oil, paprika, cumin, coriander, and cayenne into the turkey. Shape the meat into 4 equal 1-inch-thick patties. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 20 minutes and up to 4 hours.

Prepare a medium charcoal or gas grill fire. Grill the burgers, covered with vents open, until nicely marked and just cooked through (an instant-read thermometer inserted in a burger should read 165°F), 4 to 6 minutes per side.

Serve with the Cucumber & Yogurt Sauce.

cucumber & yogurt sauce

Yields about 1 cup.

This sauce can be made several hours ahead and stored in the refrigerator.

½ cup peeled, seeded, and finely diced English cucumber
2 Tbs. finely chopped red onion
Kosher salt
½ cup plain whole-milk or lowfat yogurt, preferably Greek
2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh cilantro
Pinch of sugar
Pinch of cayenne or Aleppo pepper; more to taste

Combine the cucumber, onion, and 1 tsp. salt in a bowl. Let sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes. Drain off the liquid and rinse to remove excess salt. Drain well and taste a few pieces; if it's too salty, rinse and drain again. In a small bowl, combine the cucumber and onion with the yogurt, cilantro, sugar, and cayenne or Aleppo pepper. Let sit for 30 minutes for the flavors to develop. Season to taste with salt and cayenne.



Mexican Black Bean Burgers

Serves four.

It's better to sauté these burgers rather than grill them, because they have a fragile texture and lack the protein that meat and fish have to hold everything together.

3 Tbs. olive oil
½ cup thinly sliced scallions
(both white and green parts)
⅓ cup finely chopped poblano chile
(1 small chile)
2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
15-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
½ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup toasted whole-grain breadcrumbs (about 1 slice of bread)
1 large egg, lightly beaten
½ tsp. pure chile powder, such as ancho or New Mexico
½ tsp. ground cumin
Kosher salt
Tomatillo & Avocado Salsa
(recipe at right)

Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the scallions, poblano, and garlic and cook until beginning to soften, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a food processor. Add the beans and pulse 2 or 3 times to roughly chop. Be careful not to overprocess.

Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and gently mix in the cilantro, breadcrumbs, egg, chile powder, cumin, and ¾ tsp. salt. Shape the mixture into 4 equal ¾-inch-thick patties. Refrigerate, covered, for at least 30 minutes and up to 4 hours.

Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook the burgers until nicely browned on both sides, flipping carefully, about 5 minutes total.

Serve with the Tomatillo & Avocado Salsa.

tomatillo & avocado salsa

Yields about 1 cup.

This salsa can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 2 days. It's also tasty on pork tacos or with quesadillas.


1 medium tomatillo, husked, washed, and coarsely chopped
1 Tbs. thinly sliced scallion
½ tsp. chopped garlic
½ tsp. seeded and minced serrano chile; more to taste
1 large ripe avocado, pitted, peeled, and coarsely chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Put the tomatillo, scallion, garlic, and serrano chile in a food processor and whirl until finely chopped, about 15 seconds. Add the avocado and pulse until just combined. The salsa should be chunky. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and more chile.

John Ash is a cookbook author and the founder and chef of John Ash & Co., a restaurant in Santa Rosa, California. ♦



Niçoise Salad with
Grilled Tuna & Potatoes



NICOISE COBB CAESAR

Your three favorite salads, better than ever

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

On a warm summer night, a substantial salad seems like the perfect compromise between making a big meal and eating light. I used to worry that a salad might not be dinner-ish enough for some of the heartier eaters in my extended family, but I've realized that if you start with something familiar—a classic like a Caesar, a Cobb, or a Niçoise—and give it a fresh update and a pretty presentation, guests are not only satisfied but impressed.

One of the good things about these salads is that you can prepare some of the ingredients ahead, like making the dressings and washing the greens (see the sidebar on p. 57). Other make-ahead elements include flavor-boosters like toasted pine nuts (in the Cobb) and grilled potatoes (in the Niçoise).

Once you've prepared your ingredients and are ready to put the salads together, dress each component separately. This way, you have more control and can be sure that everything is uniformly dressed. Then, take a cue from a classic composed salad and artfully arrange the ingredients on individual plates, distributing them equally. You'll be amazed at how impressive your salads will look—and taste.

Niçoise Salad with Grilled Tuna & Potatoes

Yields 6 large dinner salads.

18 small (baby) red potatoes
(about 1¼ lb.)
Kosher salt
12 oz. haricots verts (thin green beans), trimmed
3 Tbs. mayonnaise
2 tsp. honey
1½ lb. 1-inch-thick fresh tuna steaks
Freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
4 oz. small inner leaves of red leaf lettuce, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (4½ lightly packed cups)
3 oz. baby arugula, washed and spun dry (3¾ lightly packed cups)
16 large basil leaves, torn into small pieces
1 recipe Basil Vinaigrette (see below)
1¼ lb. small ripe red, yellow, and orange tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 cup Niçoise olives (or other black olives)
3 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered

Boil the potatoes and haricots verts: Put the potatoes and 2 tsp. salt in a large saucepan, add enough water to cover by 1 inch, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until easily pierced with a wooden skewer, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and let cool.

Fill the saucepan three-quarters full of fresh water and bring to a boil. Add the haricots verts and ½ tsp. salt to the water and cook until you can just bite through a bean with little resistance, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain, rinse with cool water to stop the cooking, and set aside.

Grill the potatoes and tuna: Heat a gas grill to high or prepare a hot charcoal fire.

Combine 1 Tbs. of the mayonnaise and the honey in a small bowl. Season the tuna steaks with ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper and coat both sides with the mayonnaise mixture. When the grates are very hot, grill the tuna until dark marks form on both sides, 1 to 2 minutes per side for medium rare. (If you prefer medium tuna, grill over medium-high heat for about 3 minutes per side.) Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes. Slice into ¼-inch-thick strips.

Cut the potatoes in half and toss them in a mixing bowl with the remaining 2 Tbs. mayonnaise, the mustard, and ½ tsp. salt. Turn the grill to medium high or let the fire die down some. Grill the potatoes without disturbing except to flip, until brown grill marks form on both sides, 1 to 2 minutes per side.

Assemble the salads: Set 6 large dinner plates on your counter. Put the red leaf lettuce, the arugula, and half of the basil in a large mixing bowl and toss with 2 to 3 Tbs. of the vinaigrette.

Divide the lettuce among the plates, piling it in neat, tall mounds at 12 o'clock. Combine the tomatoes and the remaining basil in the mixing bowl and toss with 2 to 3 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. Tuck the tomatoes in to the left of the lettuce and arrange the tuna to the right of the lettuce. Put the olives in the middle of each plate. Toss the green beans in the bowl with about 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. Arrange the grilled potatoes and the green beans at the bottom of each plate and tuck in the hard-cooked egg quarters wherever they look best. Drizzle a few teaspoons of the vinaigrette over the tuna and the potatoes on every plate. Serve right away.

basil vinaigrette

Yields about 1 cup.

¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup red-wine vinegar
3 Tbs. finely chopped fresh basil
1 large clove garlic, minced
1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
½ tsp. honey
¼ tsp. kosher salt
⅛ tsp. freshly ground pepper

Put all the ingredients in a glass measuring cup or a jar with a tight-fitting lid and whisk or vigorously shake to combine. Whisk again just before using. You can store the vinaigrette in the refrigerator for up to 5 days, but don't add the basil until 15 to 30 minutes before using.



Cobb Salad
with Fresh Herbs



Cobb Salad with Fresh Herbs

Yields 6 large dinner salads.

2 Tbs. mayonnaise

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 large boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
(7 to 8 oz. each), tenderloins separated if still attached

2 heads Boston lettuce (about 12 oz. total),
trimmed, torn into bite-size pieces, washed,
and dried

1½ cups lightly packed fresh parsley leaves,
torn if large

¾ cup lightly packed mint leaves, torn if large

1 recipe Lemon-Sherry Vinaigrette (see below)

3 large avocados

2½ cups (about 1 lb.) **halved grape tomatoes**

1 heaping cup (6 oz.) **crumbled Roquefort**

⅔ cup toasted pine nuts

12 slices bacon, cooked, cooled, and crumbled

½ cup sliced chives (¾ inch long)

Grill the chicken: Heat a gas grill to medium high. In a mixing bowl, combine the mayonnaise, mustard, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Add the chicken and toss to coat. Grill until well marked and cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes per side for the breasts, and 2 to 3 minutes per side for the tenderloins. Let cool and cut into small dice.

Assemble the salads: Set 6 large dinner plates on your counter. Combine the lettuce, parsley, and mint in a large mixing bowl. Toss with just enough of the vinaigrette to coat lightly, 4 to 5 Tbs. Season with a little salt and pepper and toss again. Divide among the plates, arranging the lettuce in a circle with a small hole in the center.

Peel, pit, and cut the avocados into medium dice and toss them in a medium bowl with 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. Combine about a sixth each of the avocados, tomatoes, Roquefort, pine nuts, and chicken in the mixing bowl. Season with a little salt and pepper and toss with about 1 Tbs. of the vinaigrette. (You won't use all the dressing.) Mound the mixture in the center of a salad. Repeat for the rest of the salads. Sprinkle on the bacon and chives and serve.

lemon-sherry vinaigrette

Yields 1¼ cups.

¾ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

¼ cup sherry vinegar

2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest (from about
1 large lemon)

1 tsp. granulated sugar

1 tsp. minced fresh garlic

½ tsp. Dijon mustard

½ tsp. kosher salt

¼ tsp. Worcestershire sauce

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

Put all the ingredients in a glass measuring cup or a jar with a tight-fitting lid and whisk or vigorously shake to combine. You can store the vinaigrette in the refrigerator for up to 5 days; let come to room temperature and shake or whisk before using.



Grilled-Chicken
Caesar Salad with
Garlic Croutons



Grilled-Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic Croutons

Yields 6 large dinner salads.

Vegetable oil for the grill

6 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of any excess fat (1 lb.)

1 recipe Creamy Caesar Dressing (see below)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Eight ½- to ¾-inch-thick slices dense peasant bread

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 large clove garlic, cut in half and peeled

3 hearts of romaine, trimmed, cut into 1½-inch pieces, washed, and dried (about 13½ cups)

¾ cup coarsely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (use the larger holes on a box grater)

2 large endives, trimmed, halved lengthwise, cored, and thinly sliced crosswise (3 cups)

One-half medium head frisée, trimmed, torn into bite-size pieces, washed, and dried (2 lightly packed cups)

⅓ cup fresh parsley leaves, washed, dried, and torn into smaller pieces if large

Grill the chicken: Prepare a medium-high gas or charcoal grill fire. When hot, clean the grate with a stiff wire brush and then wipe it down with a folded paper towel dipped in oil. In a medium bowl, toss the chicken with 1 Tbs. of the dressing, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Grill, covered, turning once, until nicely browned and cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Let cool and slice thinly just before serving.

Make the croutons: Reduce the grill to medium-low heat (or let the fire die down). Generously brush the bread slices on both sides with the oil and sprinkle with a little salt. Grill the bread, covered, until golden brown on both sides, 1 to 3 minutes per side. Rub the bread on both sides with the cut sides of the garlic. Let the bread cool for a few minutes and then cut into ½-inch cubes.

Assemble the salads: Set 6 large dinner plates on the counter. Arrange a sliced chicken thigh in the center of each plate and

position some of the slices near the edge of the plate so they'll be visible after the salad is mounded on top. Spoon about a teaspoon of the Caesar dressing over each of the sliced thighs.

Put the romaine in a large mixing bowl and toss with about 6 Tbs. of the dressing. Add 6 Tbs. parmigiano and a big pinch each of salt and pepper to the bowl and toss again. Arrange the romaine over the chicken on each plate. Sprinkle about half of the croutons over the plates.

Toss the endive in the mixing bowl with 2 to 3 Tbs. dressing. Add 2 Tbs. parmigiano and a pinch each of salt and pepper and toss again. Arrange the endive in the center of the romaine on each plate.

Toss the frisée in the mixing bowl with about 2 Tbs. of the dressing. Add 2 Tbs. parmigiano and a pinch each of salt and pepper and toss again. Pile the frisée in the center of the salads. Sprinkle the remaining cheese, croutons, and the parsley over the salads. Serve.

creamy caesar dressing

Yields a scant 1 cup.

3 oil-packed anchovies, rinsed and patted dry

2 large cloves garlic, smashed and peeled

1 large egg yolk

2½ Tbs. fresh lemon juice

1 Tbs. Dijon mustard

1½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest

¼ tsp. kosher salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Put all the dressing ingredients except the oil in a blender. Blend until thoroughly combined. With the motor running, carefully pour in the oil in a slow, steady stream. You can store the dressing, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Note: This recipe contains a raw egg yolk; if this is a concern, substitute a pasteurized yolk.



Salad Smarts

Five easy ways to build a better salad

Discard damaged or coarse outer lettuce leaves or save them for something else.

Wash greens well (I use a big bowl and do two or three soaks, lifting the leaves up each time so that grit settles to the bottom) and spin-dry them. Store the leaves delicately packed into large zip-top bags lined with paper towels. Most greens will keep for several days like this.

Don't overdress your salad or it'll be soggy. You can always add more dressing, but you can't take it away.

Toss with a light hand. Many of the ingredients in the salads here are delicate.

Season your greens with a little salt and pepper as you toss them with dressing. Even though the dressing is already seasoned, a little more salt and pepper at this point makes a huge flavor difference.

Susie Middleton is editor at large for Fine Cooking. ♦

Learn about the origins of these classic salads at finecooking.com/extras



Chicken Quesadillas with
Chipotle Crema & Pico de Gallo



Small Plates

Mexican Style

Classic south-of-the-border
snacks, made modern

BY SUE TORRES

In Mexico, small plates are called *antojitos* and they include such familiar foods as tacos and quesadillas. But antojitos are so much more than small plates—they're a way of life. They're little bites of flavor that Mexicans nibble on throughout the day, on their way to work or after school. And they're some of the best dishes Mexican cuisine has to offer. They're also the most fun, since it's easy to introduce new ingredients and flavors and turn something as ordinary as quesadillas into a special dish.

And that's exactly what you'll find here. These small plates are creative, stepped-up versions of traditional antojitos. Take the empanadas: pillows of puff pastry filled with sweet corn and crabmeat, served with a poblano cream sauce. Tacos are stuffed with fresh grilled summer squash and a zesty cilantro pesto, and quesadillas get an alluring smoky flavor from chipotle purée. Little bites packing big flavor.

Chicken Quesadillas with Chipotle Crema & Pico de Gallo

Serves eight.

It's worth seeking out a variety of Mexican cheeses for a more complex flavor; for a mail-order source, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 78. It's also perfectly fine to use an equal amount of Monterey Jack.

FOR THE CHIPOTLE CREMA:
7-oz. can chipotles en adobo
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Mexican crema (see note, below right) or sour cream
Kosher salt

FOR THE FILLING:
4 cups shredded cooked chicken
1 cup grated Monterey Jack
1 cup grated Mexican melting cheese, such as queso quesadilla, Chihuahua, or Oaxaca
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled Cotija cheese or queso anejo
1 recipe Pico de Gallo (see right)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

FOR ASSEMBLING THE QUESADILLAS:
Twelve 8-inch flour tortillas
 $2\frac{2}{3}$ cups thinly sliced romaine lettuce (from 1 small head, quartered lengthwise)

Make the chipotle crema: Pour the contents of the chipotles can into a blender. Rinse out the can with 2 Tbs. water and add it to the blender. Purée until smooth.

In a small bowl, whisk the crema, 2 tsp. chipotle purée, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt. Add more chipotle purée if you want more heat. Set aside $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the chipotle purée for the filling and save the rest for another use (see the note at right).

Make the filling and assemble the quesadillas: Heat the oven to 200°F. Heat a cast-iron griddle or a large cast-iron pan over medium heat. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, mix the chicken, cheeses, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups pico de gallo, and the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chipotle purée. Spread about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the filling evenly over half of one of the tortillas and fold it in half. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and filling.

Put as many quesadillas as you can fit in one layer on the hot griddle. Cook, flipping once, until golden brown on both sides, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Repeat until all the quesadillas are

cooked, keeping the finished ones warm on a baking sheet in the oven.

Cut each quesadilla into 3 wedges. Fan the wedges on small plates and mound a small pile of lettuce to the side of each serving. Garnish each with 2 Tbs. of the pico de gallo and 1 or 2 Tbs. of the chipotle crema.

pico de gallo

Yields about $3\frac{1}{4}$ cups.

Pico de gallo is a zesty Mexican salsa made with fresh tomatoes, onions, and chiles.

4 cups seeded and diced fresh tomatoes (3 large tomatoes)
1 cup small-diced white or sweet onion (1 medium onion)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fresh lime juice
2 to 3 serrano chiles, stemmed and finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh cilantro
Kosher salt

Combine the tomatoes, onion, lime juice, serranos, cilantro, and 2 tsp. salt in a large bowl. Mix well, cover, and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Season to taste with more salt if necessary. If not using right away, refrigerate for up to 3 days. Strain before using.

Note:

Leftover chipotle purée keeps well in the fridge for up to 2 months; use it to add a smoky heat to anything from scrambled eggs to pasta sauces and marinades for grilled meats.

Crema is basically Mexican sour cream, and it's available in most Mexican markets. (To learn to make crema at home, go to FineCooking.com). Both sour cream and crème fraîche are good substitutes, though crema has a more pourable consistency. Use leftover chipotle crema as you would sour cream: with tacos, eggs, or baked potatoes. It keeps for up to 3 days.

Grilled Vegetable Tacos with Cilantro Pesto

Serves eight.

If you can't find the squash-like Mexican chayote, substitute an additional zucchini and yellow squash. For more on chayote and to learn how to make your own corn tortillas, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 68.

FOR THE GRILLED VEGETABLES:
2 small zucchini, cut lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices
2 small yellow squash, cut lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices
2 medium chayote, peeled, seeded, and sliced into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices
3 Tbs. sunflower or vegetable oil
1 tsp. minced garlic
1 serrano chile, minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR ASSEMBLING THE TACOS:
Eight 6-inch corn tortillas, warmed
1 recipe Cilantro Pesto (see below)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup crumbled queso fresco cheese or feta (optional)
Coarsely chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

Grill the vegetables: Prepare a medium-high gas or charcoal grill fire.

In a large bowl, combine the zucchini, yellow squash, and chayote. Add the oil, garlic, serrano, 1 tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. pepper and toss gently to coat. Grill, covered, until the vegetables become tender and have grill marks on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. The chayote will soften but won't become limp like the zucchini and squash.

Let the vegetables cool slightly and then slice crosswise into thin strips. Season to taste with more salt and pepper.

Assemble the tacos: Spoon some of the vegetable mixture on top of each tortilla and top with a drizzle of the pesto and some crumbled cheese and chopped cilantro (if using). The filling can be warm or at room temperature.

cilantro pesto

Yields about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup.

1 cup packed coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sunflower or vegetable oil
2 Tbs. toasted pine nuts
1 medium clove garlic
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and purée until smooth. Set aside, or refrigerate in an air tight container for up to 3 days.

Find more Mexican small plates at
finecooking.com/extras

Crabmeat Empanadas with Grilled Corn Salsa & Poblano Cream Sauce

Serves sixteen.

FOR THE GRILLED CORN SALSA:

6 medium ears corn
3 Tbs. fresh lime juice
(from 1 medium lime)
2 Tbs. sunflower or vegetable oil
2 Tbs. thinly sliced chives
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE POBLANO CREAM SAUCE:

3 medium poblano peppers
1 cup heavy cream
1 Tbs. sunflower or vegetable oil
½ cup small-diced white onion
2 medium cloves garlic, minced
Kosher salt

FOR THE EMPANADAS:

½ lb. lump crabmeat, picked over for shells
2 Tbs. thinly sliced scallion greens
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 large egg
4 sheets frozen packaged puff pastry
(preferably Pepperidge Farm brand),
thawed overnight in the refrigerator

Make the grilled corn salsa: Soak the corn (with husks) in cold water for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare a medium-high gas or charcoal grill fire.

Wrap each wet corn cob separately in aluminum foil. Space them at least 1 inch apart on the grill and cook, covered, rolling each ear a quarter turn every 8 minutes until the cobs have made a complete rotation, 32 minutes total. Remove the foil, let the ears cool enough to handle, and remove the husks and silk.

Set one ear aside and put the remaining five back on the grill. Cook, turning the cobs once, until they are lightly charred, 2 to 3 minutes. Cool the corn on a rack.

Cut the charred corn from the cobs and put it in a medium bowl. Stir in the lime juice, oil, and chives and season to taste with salt and pepper. (The salsa can be made up to 8 hours ahead and refrigerated, but don't add the chives until just before serving. Serve at room temperature.)

Make the poblano cream sauce: Char the poblanos on the grill, turning them with tongs as soon as each side becomes fully blackened, 6 to 10 minutes. Put the charred poblanos in a bowl and cover. When cool enough to handle, peel and seed them.

In a heavy-duty 2-quart saucepan, bring the cream to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat to medium and simmer until reduced to ½ cup, about 5 minutes.



Crabmeat
Empanadas

Grilled
Vegetable
Tacos

Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened but not browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Put the onion mixture, poblanos, and 2 Tbs. water in a blender and purée until smooth. Stir the poblano purée into the reduced cream and season to taste with salt. Keep warm. (The sauce can be made up to 4 hours ahead; reheat before serving.)

Make the empanadas: Position racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Cut the uncharred corn from the cob. In a medium bowl, stir together the corn, crabmeat, scallion greens, lime juice, 1 tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper.

Beat the egg in small bowl with 1 Tbs. of water.

Cut each puff pastry sheet into four 3½-inch squares. Drop 1 rounded Tbs. of the crab mixture in the center of each pastry square. With a pastry brush, brush two adjoining edges of each square with the egg and fold the opposite corner over to

form a triangle, sealing all the way around with your thumb. Press a fork down on the sealed edges at regular intervals to form small ridges. Transfer the empanadas to two parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through baking.

To serve: Pour 1 Tbs. of the warm poblano cream sauce in a circle around a small plate. Put one empanada in the center of the plate and spoon a little corn salsa to the side. Serve immediately.


Make ahead:

You can assemble and freeze some or all of the empanadas to bake later. Freeze them on a baking sheet and then store in a zip-top bag for up to a month. To bake, heat the oven to 475°F. Put the frozen empanadas on a parchment-lined baking sheet, reduce the oven temperature to 400°F, and bake until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes.

Sue Torres is the chef at Sueños and Los Dados, both in New York City. ♦



Plum Tart with Lemon-
Shortbread Crust



Plum Perfect DESSERTS

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

When I was an apprentice pastry chef in Germany, I lived with a family who had a prolific old plum tree. In late summer its boughs would hang heavy with more fruit than I thought we'd ever be able to use, yet no plum went to waste. We made several kinds of kuchen (German for cake or tart) and preserves, and once we'd baked all the sweets we could possibly handle, a local distiller came and hauled off the remaining plums to turn them into the schnapps that warmed us in the winter months.

So began my love affair with plums. Now when they arrive at my local markets, I can't resist bringing home several pounds in all shapes and colors and baking up a storm.

My favorite plum desserts are familiar and comforting, but they all have a little flavor twist that makes them special, like the brown sugar and cardamom streusel that tops the coffee cake, the cinnamon-walnut biscuits for the caramelized plum shortcakes, and the plum tart's lemon-shortbread crust. Plums never tasted so perfect.

Plum Tart with Lemon-Shortbread Crust

Yields one 9-inch tart; serves eight.

This tart crust is every pastry-phobe's dream: you pat it into the pan—no rolling involved.

FOR THE FILLING:

⅓ cup plus ½ Tbs. granulated sugar
1 Tbs. cornstarch
¼ tsp. kosher salt
¼ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
6 ripe medium black or red plums (about 4 oz. each), each pitted and sliced into 16 slender wedges

FOR THE TART SHELL:

4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes; more softened for the pan
1 large egg yolk
2 tsp. firmly packed finely grated lemon zest
½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
5½ oz. (1 cup plus 3 Tbs.) unbleached all-purpose flour; more as needed
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ tsp. table salt
Cooking spray

2 Tbs. plum or apricot preserves

Begin the filling: In a medium bowl, whisk ⅓ cup of the sugar and the cornstarch, kosher salt, and lemon zest. Add the plums and gently toss with your hands to evenly coat with sugar. Cover the bowl and put it in the refrigerator for at least 3 hours or overnight.

Make the tart shell: Lightly butter the bottom and sides of a 9½-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom.

Put the butter cubes in the freezer. In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolk, lemon zest, and vanilla. Put the flour, sugar, and table salt in the bowl of a food processor and pulse

a few times to combine. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture is crumbly and mealy, about 25 short pulses. Add the egg yolk mixture and blend, using long pulses, just until it forms a moist, crumbly mass, about 15 three-second pulses. The dough won't come together on its own, but it should hold together when squeezed.

Transfer the dough to the tart pan. Dip the bottom of a flat-bottomed cup measure in flour and use it to press the dough onto the bottom and sides of the pan in an even layer. Start with the sides, which should be ¼ inch thick. Reflour the cup whenever it starts to stick to the dough. Wrap the pan in plastic and refrigerate it for at least 1 hour and up to 1 day.

Blind bake the shell: Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Unwrap the tart shell and prick the bottom and sides several times with a fork. Spray one side of a piece of parchment or foil with cooking spray. Line the shell with the sprayed side down and fill the lined shell with pie weights or dry beans. Set the tart pan on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Carefully remove the liner and pie weights. Should any dough stick to the liner, simply peel it off and patch it back into the shell. Reduce the heat to 350°F and continue baking until the sides and bottom of the shell are golden brown and dry, 10 to 15 minutes more. Cool on a rack for about 20 minutes.

Finish the tart: Drain the plums in a sieve or colander set over a medium bowl for a few minutes. Pour the juice into a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over

medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until very thick, about 3 minutes. Scrape into a small bowl and let cool for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt the preserves in the saucepan over medium-low heat until syrupy. Pour the preserves into the tart shell and evenly brush them over the bottom and sides. With a rubber spatula, spread the plum juice over the preserves on the bottom of the shell.

Starting at the edge of the shell, arrange the plum slices cut side down and tightly overlapping in concentric circles. If you have more slices, keep tucking them in wherever they fit. You can also pile a few in the center of the tart.

If any juice remains in the mixing bowl, drizzle up to 1 Tbs. over the plums. Discard the rest. Sprinkle the remaining ½ Tbs. sugar over the plums.

Bake the tart directly on the oven rack until the plums are tender when poked with a paring knife and caramelized along their edges (a few tips may even blacken), the crust is a deep golden brown, and any juices look syrupy and bubbly, 40 to 50 minutes. After you remove the tart from the oven, moisten the plums by dipping a pastry brush into the juices between the plums and brushing any surfaces that look dry.

Cool the tart in its pan on a rack for at least 2 hours before unmolding and slicing with a very sharp knife.

Make-ahead tip: You can toss the plums with the sugar mixture and chill the unbaked tart shell up to a day in advance.

Choosing plums for baking

A plum is a plum is a plum. Or so it would seem, given that most stores label them simply red, black, purple, or yellow. But, in reality, there are at least 200 varieties. Once harvested, plums don't store well and must be shipped and sold within 10 days. So growers produce several varieties that ripen on a staggered schedule from mid-May through October to ensure constant supply. What this means is that the red or purple plums you saw on your last market visit are probably not the same varieties you'll find on your next. I tried dozens of kinds of plums and found that the variety doesn't matter much. The fruit's ripeness, however, matters quite a bit.

Go for firm-ripe plums

The ideal plum for baking is neither super-soft nor rock hard but somewhere in between. Take a plum and squeeze it gently in the palm of your hand. It should smell fragrant and feel firm yet springy. These plums are easy to slice, and during baking they become tender without losing their shape or releasing too much juice. If you can find only very firm plums, let them ripen in a paper bag at room temperature for a couple of days. For the shortcakes, however, you can get away with using underripe plums because the caramelization softens and sweetens the fruit.



Plum Coffee Cake with Brown Sugar & Cardamom Streusel

*Yields one 8-inch-square cake;
serves eight or nine.*

I like to serve this cake drizzled with a little heavy cream or crème fraîche, but it's just as delicious by itself. The cake will keep for a day, covered, at room temperature; if you keep it longer, the moisture from the plums will start to soften the streusel.

FOR THE STREUSEL:

2¼ oz. (½ cup) unbleached all-purpose flour
¼ cup packed dark brown sugar
⅛ tsp. kosher salt
Pinch (about ⅙ tsp.) ground cardamom
**1½ oz. (3 Tbs.) unsalted butter, melted;
more as needed**

FOR THE CAKE:

**4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into
small pieces; more softened for the pan**
**6¾ oz. (1½ cups) unbleached all-purpose
flour; more for the pan**

2 large eggs

½ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup packed dark or light brown sugar
¼ cup whole milk
1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
1½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. table salt
½ tsp. ground cardamom
**3 firm-ripe medium plums, each pitted
and quartered**

Make the streusel: Put the flour, sugar, kosher salt, and cardamom in a small mixing bowl and stir the ingredients with a fork until thoroughly combined. Drizzle the melted butter over the mixture and stir with the fork until the mixture resembles a clumpy dough. Using your fingers, break the mixture into pistachio-size clumps and large crumbs. (If the streusel is sandy and won't clump, add a little more melted butter, 1 tsp. at a time.) Refrigerate the streusel while you prepare the cake batter.

Make the cake: Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Lightly butter and flour an 8x8x2-inch straight-sided cake pan.

Beat the eggs lightly in a small mixing bowl. Whisk in the granulated sugar, brown sugar, milk, and vanilla until well blended. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, table salt, and cardamom until well blended. Add the butter pieces to the bowl and cut them into the flour with a pastry blender until the mixture resembles a very coarse meal strewn with pieces of butter the size of small peas and oat flakes.

Add the egg mixture to the flour mixture. With a wooden spoon, fold and stir the ingredients together until it's a thick batter speckled with visible lumps of butter, 45 seconds to 1 minute.

Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and spread it evenly. Break up the streusel mixture with your fingers and sprinkle half of it evenly over the batter. Arrange the plum quarters skin side down on the batter, with each piece at a 45-degree angle to the sides of the pan. Sprinkle the remaining streusel evenly over the cake.

Bake the cake for 20 minutes and then rotate the pan. Continue baking until the top of the cake is golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with a few moist crumbs clinging to it, 15 to 20 minutes more.

Cool the cake in its pan on a rack for at least an hour before cutting. Serve warm or at room temperature.





Cinnamon-Walnut Shortcakes
with Caramelized Plums

Cinnamon-Walnut Shortcakes with Caramelized Plums

Serves eight.

If you're making the biscuits in a hot kitchen, try to keep the ingredients as cold as possible for the flakiest texture.

FOR THE BISCUITS:

4 oz. (8 Tbs.) cold butter, cut into small pieces
12 oz. (2⅔ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for dusting
⅓ cup granulated sugar
1½ Tbs. baking powder
1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. table salt
⅛ tsp. ground nutmeg
¾ cup (about 3 oz.) walnuts, toasted and very roughly chopped
1 cup plus 2 Tbs. cold heavy cream; more for brushing
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 Tbs. demerara or turbinado sugar

1 recipe Caramelized Plums (at right)

FOR THE WHIPPED-CREAM TOPPING:

1 cup cold heavy cream
¼ cup cold sour cream
3 Tbs. confectioners' sugar

Make the biscuits: Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment.

Chill the butter pieces in the freezer for about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, whisk the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, and nutmeg. With a pastry blender, cut in the cold butter until the mixture resembles a very coarse meal strewn with pieces of butter the size of peas and pistachios. Add the walnuts and toss with a fork to distribute them.

Combine the cream with the vanilla in a liquid measuring cup. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and pour the cream into the well. With a fork, work your way around the bowl, pulling the dry ingredients into the wet and mixing until the ingredients are mostly moistened and a rough dough forms. Gently knead the dough a few times in the bowl to pick up any dry ingredients in the bottom of the bowl and bring it together into

a loose ball. Transfer the dough to the parchment-lined baking sheet and pat into a ¾-inch-thick circle. Refrigerate for about 20 minutes.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Dip a 3-inch round plain-edge biscuit cutter in flour and cut straight down through the dough without twisting to form the biscuits. (Dip the cutter in flour before cutting each biscuit.) Carefully move the biscuits to one end of the baking sheet. Gather the dough scraps together, knead briefly to smooth the dough, and pat into a ¾-inch-thick circle on the other end of the baking sheet. Cut out more biscuits. Repeat one more time. You can use the remaining scraps to make an additional biscuit or two, but those won't have as nice a texture as the others.

Spread the biscuits out over the baking sheet. Lightly brush their tops with cream and then sprinkle with the demerara sugar.

Put the baking sheet in the oven and lower the temperature to 425°F. Bake until the biscuits are deeply browned on top and bottom, 20 to 25 minutes. Let them cool on a rack while you make the caramelized plums.

Make the whipped cream: Using a chilled bowl and beaters, whip the heavy cream with a hand-held or stand mixer on medium speed until it thickens slightly. Add the sour cream and confectioners' sugar and whip on medium-high speed until it holds medium peaks. Use right away.

Assemble the shortcakes: Using a fork, split each biscuit in half horizontally. Set the bottom halves on serving plates and spoon 5 or 6 plum wedges onto each biscuit. Dollop the cream on the plums and drizzle with some of the caramelized plum juice. Perch the tops of the biscuits on the cream. If you have plums left, arrange them on the plates alongside the shortcakes.

caramelized plums

Yields about 3 cups.

If you're looking for a shortcut summer dessert, these plums are terrific as a topping for ice cream.

1 Tbs. unsalted butter
⅓ cup granulated sugar
Large pinch kosher salt
5 firm medium plums, each cut into 10 wedges (see tip in From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68)

In a 12-inch heavy-duty skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the sugar, salt, and 1 Tbs. water. Swirl the pan to moisten and dissolve the sugar. Cook until the mixture becomes a bubbling golden caramel, 3 to 5 minutes. Immediately remove the pan from the heat.

Carefully add the plum wedges to the pan, spreading them out evenly. Set the pan over medium heat and cook, shaking the pan every 30 seconds or so, until the plums start to release their juices, 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the plums with tongs and cook until soft (but not mushy) and golden brown along some of the cut edges, 1 to 5 minutes more.

If you're making the plums for the shortcakes, pour the contents of the pan into a medium bowl and cover to keep warm.

Kimberly Y. Masibay is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. ♦





Getting to know passionfruit

Passionfruit adds an exotic, tropical flavor to summery fruit salads, sorbets, and frozen blender drinks, like daiquiris. Native to South America, these eggplant-color orbs are like inside-out Fabergé eggs—their dull, leathery exterior belies the jewel-like seeds and heady, fragrant pulp contained within.

Passionfruits get uglier as they ripen, so choose ones that have wrinkly or dimpled skin and feel heavy for their size. The best indicator of ripeness is the gentle sloshing sound they make when shaken. If you can find only underripe ones, let them sit out at room temperature for a few days to ripen.

When you're ready to use them, cut them in half with kitchen shears over a fine strainer set in a bowl to catch the juices. Then scoop out the seedy flesh and press it through the strainer. (The seeds are edible, but most recipes call for strained pulp.) A ripe passion fruit yields about 1 tablespoon of pulp with seeds or ½ tablespoon strained.

—Dabney Gough

trick of the trade

Quick-pick parsley

There's a certain Zen-like state that can be reached while performing menial tasks like washing dishes or picking parsley leaves off their stems. But for a recipe that calls for a lot of parsley—like the Grilled Lamb Chops with Herb Salad on p. 82a—the meditative state can sometimes turn maddening. In these cases, try a technique used in restaurant kitchens: Rather than picking the leaves individually, “shave” them right off the bunch.

Hold a rinsed bunch of parsley with the leaves facing away from you. Graze a chef's knife along the length of the bunch, starting near the base of the leaves and keeping the blade almost parallel to the stems. As long as you have a sharp blade, the leaves (and some of the more tender stems) will come right off. —D.G.



How to cut a plum into 10 even wedges

For the Caramelized Plums recipe on p. 67, contributing editor Kimberly Masibay came up with this clever technique for quickly cutting a plum into 10 even pieces.



1. Find the indentation running down the length of the plum. With your knife parallel to the indentation, cut the flesh away from the pit in two pieces and set them aside.



2. Trim the remaining flesh from each side of the pit—these are two of your wedges.



3. Slice the two larger pieces into four wedges each, for a total of 10 wedges.

Chayote, the vegetable pear

The unusual-looking vegetable known as chayote (chah-YO-tay) adds a lovely, lightly crunchy texture to the Grilled Vegetable Tacos on p. 60. Also known as a mirliton or vegetable pear, it's part of the gourd family, which includes cucumbers, squashes, and melons. Chayotes have a mild cucumber-like flavor and can be prepared in any way you might use summer squash, raw or cooked. The large center seed is edible, though you might prefer to remove it.

Chayotes may have smooth or spiky skin, but the smooth ones are what you're likely to find in the United States. You can buy them in Latin markets and in some supermarkets (they're often stocked near the bell peppers and chiles). Choose ones that are firm and unblemished. They'll keep in the refrigerator for several weeks.

—D.G.



Sushi-grade label is no guarantee

Recipes for raw or rare fish dishes, like sushi, seiche, or the tuna burger on p. 48, often call for sushi- or sashimi-grade fish. These interchangeable terms sound like they might be official grades (like Prime or Choice for beef), but there's actually no official definition or government enforcement for how they're used. Within the seafood industry, they're generally applied to fish that's very fresh

or frozen, making it somewhat safer to eat raw compared with other, less fresh raw fish.

Because these labels aren't a guarantee of quality or freshness, it's important to buy from a fishmonger you trust. When you're at the counter, mention that you'll be eating the fish raw; that way, you'll probably get a more honest recommendation on what's best (and safest). —D.G.

What's seasoned rice vinegar?

Seasoned rice vinegar is plain (or "natural") rice vinegar to which sugar and salt are added. It's an easy way to boost the sweet, salty, and tangy elements of a dish all at once, as in the Pan-Seared Salmon with Plum Salad on p. 82a.

Look for seasoned rice vinegar in the Asian section of supermarkets or in Japanese specialty stores. Some brands contain high-fructose corn syrup, so if that's of concern to you, be sure to check the label. You may also want to avoid varieties with additional flavors, like roasted garlic or basil. If you want these flavors in your dish, too, you're better off adding them fresh yourself. —D.G.

Make your own seasoned rice vinegar

If you already have some plain rice vinegar in the pantry and would rather not buy a separate bottle of seasoned vinegar, just combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the plain rice vinegar with 4 teaspoons sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt.



A Mexican pantry staple

Masa harina, a flour made from specially treated ground corn, is the foundation for tortillas, tamales, sopas, and many other corn-based Mexican treats.

To make masa harina, corn kernels are dried, then rehydrated and treated with lime (calcium oxide), which makes it possible to remove the skins. Once the skins are rubbed off, the kernels are thoroughly washed and ground into soft, pliable masa (dough). The fresh masa is then dried and powdered, becoming masa harina (harina means flour).

Though fresh masa is generally preferable to masa harina, it's very perishable and therefore difficult to find outside Mexico and its U.S. border states. Masa harina, on the other hand, has a shelf life closer to that of regular wheat flour. It's a pantry staple even in areas where fresh masa is available. To use it, you simply add water.

Look for masa harina at Latin markets and well-stocked supermarkets, or see p. 78 for a mail-order source. Maseca and Quaker are the most widely available brands. Store it as you would all-purpose wheat flour: well-wrapped and in a dry place for up to a year. —D.G.



Handmade Corn Tortillas

Yields fourteen to sixteen 5½-inch tortillas.

There's just no comparison between supple, aromatic, freshly made corn tortillas and store-bought ones. You can roll out tortillas by hand, but a tortilla press makes for faster, more consistent results. It's an inexpensive tool (see p. 78 for a mail-order source), and if you have one, it's more likely that you'll make fresh tortillas often.

2 cups masa harina; more as needed
¼ tsp. table salt

In a medium bowl, combine the masa harina and salt with 1¼ cups warm water. Mix and knead with your hands until the dough is smooth and homogenous. It should be soft but not sticky, like soft Play-Doh; if necessary, adjust the texture with more water or masa harina. Cover with plastic and set aside at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours.

Cut two squares or rounds of heavy plastic (from a zip-top bag or a plastic grocery bag) to fit the plates of a tortilla press. Set a large flat griddle on the stove, straddling two burners. Turn one burner on medium low and the other on medium high. (Use two skillets if you don't have a large griddle.)

Pinch off a golfball-size piece of dough and roll it into a ball. Cover the bottom plate of the press with a sheet of plastic and put the dough ball in the center. Cover with the other sheet of plastic and press with your palm to flatten slightly. **1** Close the press and firmly push down on the handle. Rotate the tortilla one-

half turn and press again. Repeat if necessary until the tortilla is an even ⅛ inch thick.

Peel off the top sheet of plastic, flip the tortilla over onto your hand, and carefully peel off the other plastic sheet. (If the tortilla breaks, the dough is too dry; if it sticks, the dough is too wet.)

2 Lay the tortilla on the cool side of the griddle by quickly flipping your hand over the griddle. Cook just until the tortilla loosens from the griddle, 15 to 20 seconds (if the tortilla bubbles, the heat is too high).

3 With a spatula, flip the tortilla over onto the hot side and cook until the bottom is lightly browned in spots, about 20 seconds more. **4** Flip again so the first side is on the hot part of the griddle and cook until the tortilla puffs in spots and browns lightly on that side, about 20 seconds more (if it doesn't puff, the griddle isn't hot enough, the dough is too dry, or you cooked it too long on the cool side). Immediately wrap the tortilla in a clean, dry cloth.

Repeat pressing and cooking the remaining dough, stacking and wrapping the finished tortillas in the cloth. Once they're all cooked, let them rest in the cloth for 10 to 15 minutes before serving. During this time, they'll steam themselves, becoming soft and pliable. You can also wrap the cloth-wrapped stack in foil and keep warm in a 200°F oven for about an hour.

Make ahead: Well-wrapped tortillas keep in the freezer for up to a month. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat before using.

—Jennifer Armentrout,
senior food editor ♦



How to butterfly a chicken

To ensure that his grill-roasted chicken (p. 38) cooks quickly and evenly, contributing editor Tony Rosenfeld butterflies the chicken, a technique that involves removing the backbone and opening the chicken like a book. We like to remove the breastbone too, because carving the cooked chicken is easier without it. If you'd rather skip that part, just do steps 1 and 5, but press down on the breastbone in step 5 to flatten the bird.



1. With a sharp pair of shears, cut parallel to the backbone about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the center. Repeat on the other side to release the backbone.



2. With a boning knife, cut through the cartilage in the middle of the chicken until you hit the top of the breast bone.



3. Score the membrane over the breast bone from top to bottom.



4. Bend the sides backward to pop the top of the breast bone free. Pull the bone out.



5. Tuck the tips of the wings behind the breast. (Some chickens come with the tips already trimmed; if so, leave the wings as they are.)

See this in action at
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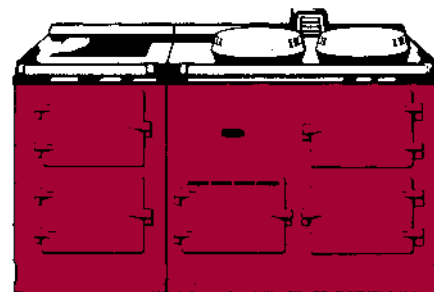
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The microwave demystified

Microwaves may be a fixture in most kitchens, but there's a lot about them we don't understand. How do they work? Are they safe? We asked scientist and author Robert L. Wolke to answer the hard questions about this mysterious appliance.

How do microwave ovens heat food?

In a microwave oven, an electronic device generates a form of electromagnetic radiation called microwaves, which are very similar to radio waves but with a shorter wavelength and higher energy. When you put food in a microwave oven, water molecules in the food absorb the microwaves and start flip-flopping around and getting hot. This hot water and steam, in turn, heat the rest of the food.

Why do microwaves cook so much faster than regular ovens?

A regular oven heats the air inside the oven, and this hot air gradually transfers its heat energy to the food. This type of heat transfer is a slow, inefficient process. Microwaves, on the other hand, efficiently deposit their energy directly into the food, agitating the molecules and quickly creating widespread heat within the food.

Why does food in the center of a container take longer to heat up? And why does the container get hotter than the food?

The food in the center of a container takes longer to heat because microwaves don't reach it there. Microwaves penetrate food to a depth of about ½ inch. This outer region heats up rapidly, creating a layer of very hot food that surrounds a cool interior. Heat energy transfers from this hot outer region to the container, making it very hot. Heat also transfers to adjacent food molecules in the cooler center. But as

in a regular oven, it takes time for heat from the hot exterior of the food to work its way deep into the food.

In a microwave you can speed things along by stopping and stirring the food, which distributes the heat and moves cool food out toward the walls of the container where the microwaves can reach it when you continue the heating.

What foods can't be cooked in a microwave?

Microwaves are absorbed mainly by water and to some extent fats, so dry, fat-free foods won't heat up.

Honestly, how safe are microwave ovens?

They're safe. Period. For at least three reasons:

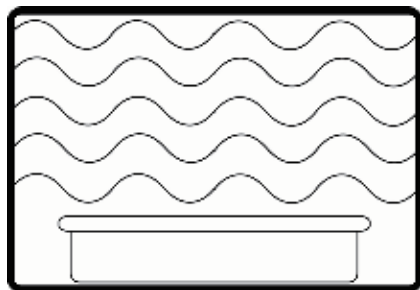
1. The microwaves bounce back and forth off the walls of their steel-box enclosure and remain imprisoned. (If, however, your oven is beat up and the door doesn't close tightly, you'd be wise to replace it.)
2. Microwaves have a wavelength of an inch or two and simply can't fit through the holes in that perforated metal screen in the door. So go ahead—stand in front of the door and watch the fun going on inside for as long as you wish.
3. The device that generates the microwaves turns off instantly when the door opens.

That said, there are a couple of hazards to watch out for. Hot containers, for one. And when heating a mug of water for tea or coffee, be careful. Even before the water appears to boil vigorously, pockets of water in the cup may actually become "superheated"

(i.e., hotter than water's boiling point, 212°F). Then, if you disturb the water by grabbing the cup, the water may boil explosively and scald you. To prevent this, I put a fork in the cup to "defuse" any superheated water before removing the cup from the oven.

What does it mean when something is labeled microwave safe?

The microwave-safe symbol (below) or the words "microwave safe" mean three things:



1. That an object won't absorb microwaves and get hot as a result. (But of course, any container can get hot from contact with its hot contents.) So in that sense, all plastics, glass, cloth, and paper are "safe." But metals, in general, are not, because they will not only over-heat but may actually spark.

2. That an object will not melt or deform in the microwave. Plastic film and some plastic containers are not labeled microwave safe because they may warp or even melt when they come in contact with hot food, possibly leading to spillage. If you must microwave foods in a plastic-wrap-covered container, leave an air space between the food and the plastic so that the wrap doesn't melt from contact with the hot food. Use a

container large enough to allow an inch of space between the wrap and the food and turn back a corner or cut vents in the wrap to allow steam to escape.

3. That the object is chemically and toxicologically harmless according to the FDA's or the manufacturer's own tests. Although the United States Food and Drug Administration certifies various plastics used in packaging as safe for contact with food, this does not mean that all those plastics have been deemed safe for hot food. There is some concern that the heat from hot food (not the microwaves) could cause some plastics to leach harmful chemicals. So before declaring a plastic microwave safe, the FDA performs rigorous leaching tests under different conditions of food type, temperature, contact time, and area. A plastic is certified as microwave safe only if the amount of leached chemical is hundreds or thousands of times less (per pound of body weight) than what has been found to harm laboratory animals after a lifetime of use. (Manufacturers do not have to submit their products to the FDA for testing.)

Recently, there has been growing concern about a chemical called bisphenol A, or BPA, leaching from polycarbonate bottles, especially baby bottles. Fetuses, infants, and children are most susceptible to its effects, which mimic those of sex-related hormones. (Polycarbonate containers are rigid and transparent, with the recycling code 7 on the bottom.) To play it safe until more is known about this hazard, the National Toxicology Program recommends that you use glass or soft-plastic baby bottles and that you do not microwave food in polycarbonate containers.

Microwave dos and don'ts

Do use containers that are designed for use in the microwave and are labeled microwave safe.

Do vent the lid.

Do prevent splatters by covering food with waxed paper, parchment, or white paper towels.

Don't use plastic containers that are designed for cold storage, such as margarine tubs, yogurt containers, water bottles, etc.

Don't let plastic wrap touch the food that's being heated.

Don't put plastic bags from the grocery store in the microwave. They will melt.

Robert L. Wolke, professor emeritus of chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh, is the author of What Einstein Told His Cook. ♦

Extra-virgin olive oil

BY DENISE MICKELSEN

At the peak of summer, eating light takes on a whole new meaning. Crisp salads with vibrant vinaigrettes, lightly dressed fresh pastas, and grilled lean meats and vegetables dominate the dinner table. Extra-virgin olive oil is ideal for preparing and garnishing these summery dishes, but which oil to buy? The vast array available at the supermarket can be overwhelming.

We thought we'd help by exploring the world of supermarket extra-virgin olive oils. In general, they should have a balance of bitterness, fruitiness (a distinct olive flavor), and pungency (in olive oil terminology, the peppery bite in the back of your throat). But because extra-virgin olive oils are blended and processed differently around the world, each oil is unique in aroma and flavor (appearance has no bearing on the quality of an oil). They run the gamut from mild and delicate to peppery and robust, depending on the production region, the harvest season, the olive varieties included in the finished oil, the acidity level, and many other factors.

There's really only one way to figure out which olive oils you like, and that's to taste and taste again. We sampled 23 readily available extra-virgin olive oils from across the globe (see *It's All About the Taste*, opposite, for an explanation of our tasting process). The oils listed here were our favorites.



Smooth & buttery

Silky-smooth and mild but never bland

Ollo: Mild and Mellow (\$10.49 for 16.9 oz.), from Australia, is aptly named—it's subtle, smooth, and delicate, with a green, perfumy aroma. The finish was mild too, which makes it ideal for vinaigrettes.

Colavita extra-virgin olive oil (about \$9 for 17 oz.), made exclusively from Italian-grown olives, is our number one choice for cooking. The aroma was understated and the flavor buttery, almost silky, with the barest hint of a peppery finish. It would be a good addition to any recipe where you're looking for subtle olive flavor, like those featuring mild, flaky fish or fresh vegetables.

Fruity & fresh

Versatile and medium bodied, with fruity aroma and flavor

Tassos (\$10.69 for 17 oz.), harvested and bottled in Crete, Greece, is a winner for its deep, almost smoky fruitiness. The fragrance is strong but pleasant, evocative of crisp greens, apples, green olives, and unripe bananas. Very fresh and only slightly bitter, this oil would be wonderful in a salsa with grilled meats, in any raw or gently cooked sauce, or served with crusty bread for dipping.

Lucini's (about \$14 for 500 ml) Italian organic extra-virgin olive oil is a clear favorite, with fruity and herbal notes in both the aroma and flavor. Tasters picked up a lot of green banana and fresh olive flavor and really enjoyed the subtle peppery kick in the finish. We would happily use this oil for dressing green or vegetable salads or on zesty pastas.



The ideal oil for:

- **Cooking:** Colavita
- **Vinaigrettes:** Ollo: Mild & Mellow
- **All-purpose:** Filippo Berio
- **Dipping crusty bread:** Tassos
- **A finishing touch:** McEvoy Ranch

What does extra-virgin really mean?

According to the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC), olive oil qualifies as extra-virgin if it has been mechanically extracted from the olives (no chemicals or heat can be used in the process), has no more than 0.8% acidity, and has no defects in flavor or aroma. The United States is not a member of the IOOC, but oils from California are regulated by the California Olive Oil Council, whose standards are even stricter: It allows no more than 0.5% acidity.

It's all about the taste

Tasting extra-virgin olive oil, like tasting wines or even chocolate, is a science unto itself, but our methodology was relatively simple. We conducted three separate tastings of seven or eight olive oils each so that we wouldn't get palate-weary. At professional olive-oil tastings, oils are served in blue or green glasses so the tasters will not be influenced by the oil's color, but for simplicity's sake, we poured ours into small white plastic cups.

We smelled each oil, sipped the oil straight, and then tasted it with very thin slices of white bread. Tart green apples served as palate cleansers (water and oil don't mix, so drinking water is ineffective). Our goal was to categorize each olive oil into one of the four flavor categories at left and to recommend culinary uses, whether for cooking or as a finishing touch.

Green & herbaceous

Think green—freshly mowed grass and leafy herbs

We loved **Terra Medi's** (about \$12 for 500 ml) grassy, herbal scent. Produced from Greek olives, it is well balanced with a clean mouth-feel and notes of green fruits and nuts. The finish is buttery and mildly bitter, and it unfolds gently across the palate. This oil would be delicious drizzled over bruschetta or bean salads or with rich, grilled fish or meat dishes.

Unio's (about \$13 for 17 oz.) extra-virgin olive oil is made from Arbequina olives grown in the Catalan province of Spain. Its fresh, green aroma and flavor won us over immediately. With loads of olive fruitiness up front and a lovely pungent kick at the end, this would be a great oil for garnishing summer soups or platters of cured meats.

Peppery & ripe

Robust and complex, with a spicy kick and earthy olive flavor

McEvoy Ranch (\$20 for 375 ml), an extra-virgin olive oil from California's Napa Valley, was one of the most complex and deeply flavored oils of the lot. We loved its ripe, oliv fragrance, intensely floral and fruity flavors, and pungent, peppery finish. We wouldn't cook with it because heat would diminish its nuances. It's perfect for garnishing a cheese plate or a platter of grilled meat and vegetables.

Filippo Berio (about \$6 for 17 oz.), a blend of extra-virgin olive oils from several Mediterranean countries, is powerful, with a bright, citrusy fragrance and an almost hay-like flavor, with a prickly, spicy bite at the end. This is an excellent choice for cooking when you want to add ripe olive notes to your food, but it's nuanced enough to stand on its own, too.

Speaking the language

As with wine tasting, there is a vocabulary for tasting extra-virgin olive oils. To help our tasters pin down the flavors they were experiencing, we referenced the following list of terms: almond, apple, artichoke, astringent, banana, bitter, briny, burnt, coarse, earthy, flat, fresh, fruity, grassy, greasy, green, harmonious, hay-like, herbal, lemony, melony, metallic, musky, nutty, old, peppery, perfumy, pungent, rancid, rough, suave, sweet, winy. ♦



In Season, p. 22

For fleur de sel, a French specialty sea salt, visit Earthy.com (800-367-4709); prices start at \$7.50 for a 2.75-ounce jar.

Grill-Roasting, p. 34

To determine if your roast is done, it helps to have a reliable instant-read probe thermometer on hand. CDN is a good brand to try; look for their thermometers at Kitchenkaboodle.com (800-366-0161), where prices range from \$17.95 to \$29.95.

Burgers, p. 46

In the Stuffed Blue Cheese Burger recipe, John Ash recommends a creamy blue cheese like Point Reyes Farmstead Original Blue. It's available at Whole Foods Markets and some well-stocked supermarkets. For a variety of other great blue cheeses, try Murrayscheese.com (888-692-4339).

Like the glassware in this story? You can find it at Theurbannestsf.com (415-341-0116), where the wine tumblers on p. 49 are \$8 each and the blue Moroccan-style glasses on p. 50 are \$5 each.



Heirloom Tomatoes, p. 40

If you're not sure where to find heirloom tomatoes in your area, you can search for local farm markets at Localharvest.org. In addition, the USDA offers a searchable database of farmers' markets at Ams.USDA.gov/farmersmarkets.

Niçoise, Cobb & Caesar Salads, p. 52

Editor at large Susie Middleton swears by her Oxo salad spinner for spin-drying greens. You can find one at Cookswares.com (800-915-9788), where they sell for \$29.99.

Mexican Small Plates, p. 58

Queso quesadilla (also known as Chihuahua cheese) and Cotija cheese (a.k.a. queso anejo or anejado) are available at Mexican grocery stores. You can also order them online at Igourmet.com (877-446-8763); both cheeses are \$3.99 a half-pound. The site also carries queso Oaxaca (\$10.99 a half-pound).

Mud Australia makes the dinnerware we photographed for this story. It no longer comes in orange, but you can find a variety of other colors at Vivionline.com (301-656-5626), where plate prices start at \$32.

Plum Desserts, p. 62

Visit Beyondpotsandpans.com (800-663-8810) for an 8x8x2-inch straight-sided cake pan (\$16.95), a large rimmed baking sheet (also called a jelly roll pan; from \$9.95), and a 9½-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom (also called a quiche pan; \$7.95). To mail order demerara sugar (1 pound for \$3.75) and turbinado sugar (2 pounds for \$6.35), look to Lepicerie.com (866-350-7575).

From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68

We bought our metal tortilla press for \$18.95 at Mexgrocer.com (877-463-9476). The site also sells masa harina and canned chipotles in adobo (from \$2.25 for a 7-ounce can), though you can find these in many supermarkets. ♦



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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Letters	8												
Kicked-Up Ketchup		25	10	0	3	1	0	0.5	0	0	125	0	per 1 Tbs.
Grill-Roasting	34												
Honey-Barbecued Chicken		660	330	60	22	36	9	16	7	190	1350	1	per 1 Tbs.
Honey Glaze		40	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	230	0	
Spice-Rubbed Pork Loin with Jalapeño-Lime Salsa		460	240	48	5	27	7	15	2.5	130	890	1	per 1 Tbs.
Jalapeño-Lime Salsa		15	15	0	1	1.5	0	1	0	0	50	0	
Pepper-Crusted Roast Beef with Rosemary Chimichurri		290	130	36	0	15	5	8	1	95	500	0	per 1 Tbs.
Rosemary Chimichurri		40	40	0	0	4.5	0	0.5	3	0	70	0	
Heirloom Tomatoes	40												
Heirloom Cherry Tomato, Fennel & Arugula Salad		180	130	5	10	14	3.5	7	1	10	280	3	
Heirloom Tomato Napoleon with Parmesan Crisps		230	150	8	16	17	3.5	6	6	5	390	5	
Smoked Heirloom Tomato Relish with Corn & Beans		160	90	3	18	10	1.5	7	1.5	0	190	4	
Burgers	46												
Stuffed Blue Cheese Burgers		560	350	37	5	39	20	14	1.5	155	1000	0	per 1 Tbs.
Red Wine Pan Sauce		50	35	1	1	4	2.5	1	0	10	75	0	
Fresh Tuna Burgers with Ginger & Cilantro		320	160	27	10	18	2.5	6	3.5	45	1000	0	per 1 Tbs.
Thai-Style Dipping Sauce		20	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	350	0	
Middle Eastern Turkey Burgers		400	230	36	4	26	7	11	5	130	840	1	per 1 Tbs.
Cucumber & Yogurt Sauce		10	5	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	70	0	
Mexican Black Bean Burgers		300	170	9	26	19	3	13	2.5	55	490	9	per 1 Tbs.
Tomatillo & Avocado Salsa		20	15	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	35	1	
Cobb, Niçoise & Caesar Salads	52												
Grilled-Chicken Caesar Salad with Garlic Croutons		590	340	29	37	38	7	24	6	105	1400	10	with dressing
Creamy Caesar Dressing		80	70	3	1	8	1	5	1	20	350	0	per 1 Tbs.
Cobb Salad with Fresh Herbs		800	600	37	18	67	14	34	11	95	1280	10	with dressing
Lemon-Sherry Vinaigrette		90	80	0	1	9	1.5	7	1	0	30	0	per 1 Tbs.
Niçoise Salad with Grilled Tuna & Potatoes		690	430	34	31	48	8	28	6	150	1330	5	with dressing
Basil Vinaigrette		90	90	0	1	10	1.5	7	1	0	40	0	per 1 Tbs.
Mexican Small Plates	58												
Grilled Vegetable Tacos with Cilantro Pesto		290	200	6	18	23	3.5	5	14	5	260	3	per 1 Tbs.
Cilantro Pesto		90	90	0	0	10	1	2	6	0	45	0	
Chicken Quesadillas with Chipotle Crema & Pico de Gallo		560	200	40	49	22	11	8	2	105	1290	4	per 1 Tbs.
Pico de Gallo		5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	45	0	
Crabmeat Empanadas with Corn Salsa & Poblano Sauce		470	290	9	37	33	7	8	16	45	560	2	
Plum Desserts	62												
Plum Coffee Cake with Brown Sugar Streusel		350	140	5	48	16	10	4.5	1	85	240	1	per ¼ cup
Cinnamon-Walnut Shortcakes with Caramelized Plums		690	410	8	63	46	25	12	7	125	420	3	
Caramelized Plums		60	15	0	13	1.5	1	0	0	5	20	1	
Plum Tart with Lemon-Shortbread Crust		280	110	3	40	13	8	3.5	0.5	55	110	1	
Test Kitchen	68												
Handmade Corn Tortillas		50	5	1	11	0.5	0	0	0	0	40	2	per tortilla
Quick & Delicious	82a												
Shrimp Salad Rolls with Tarragon & Chives		390	170	29	25	18	3.5	1	1	230	800	1	
Grilled Lamb Chops with Fresh Herb & Feta Salad		570	390	37	8	43	16	21	3.5	140	380	3	
Summer Vegetable Soup with Dill		120	35	6	16	4	3	1	0	10	250	2	
Linguine with Roasted Red Peppers & Tomatoes		610	160	18	84	19	3	11	2.5	5	1380	5	
Romaine, Bacon & Tomato Salad with Tarragon Vinaigrette		200	130	6	14	14	2.5	9	1.5	10	590	2	
Vietnamese-Style Chicken Salad		220	70	27	11	7	1.5	3	2	65	1260	2	
Pan-Seared Salmon with Plum-Cucumber Salad		360	150	39	10	17	2.5	7	6	105	300	1	
Grilled Skirt Steak with Quick Romesco Sauce		360	160	30	14	18	5	10	1	60	780	1	
Back Cover													
Grilled Sausage with Summer Squash, Herbs & Olives		320	240	13	10	26	7	14	3	35	1260	2	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional

ingredients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅓ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅓ teaspoon salt and ⅓ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.



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Grilled Sausage with Summer Squash, Fresh Herbs & Olives

Serves four.

If you like, add other summer vegetables, like peppers, eggplant or sweet onions.

1½ lb. mixed summer squash, cut into 1-inch chunks
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and black pepper

1 lb. Italian sausage links (chicken or pork)
⅓ cup mixed herbs, such as cilantro, parsley, mint, and basil, chopped
⅓ cup pitted Kalamata olives, halved
1 Tbs. capers, rinsed
Squeeze of fresh lemon juice

Prepare a medium-hot grill fire.

Toss the squash with the olive oil in a medium bowl; season to taste with salt and pepper.

Grill the squash and the sausage, turning frequently, until the squash is just tender and the sausage is cooked through, 8 to

12 minutes. Cut the sausage into 1-inch chunks. Toss the squash and sausage with the herbs, olives, and capers. Season with lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

Recipe by Allison Ehri Kreitler, test kitchen associate.

quick & delicious



Pan-Seared Salmon with Plum-Cucumber Salad

Serves four.

If you can't find ripe plums, try pluots or apricots instead.

4 small ripe plums (12 oz.), pitted and thinly sliced
½ cup seeded, small-diced English cucumber
¼ cup small-diced red onion
¼ cup small-diced orange bell pepper
Scant ¼ cup small fresh cilantro leaves
4 tsp. canola oil
2 tsp. seasoned rice vinegar (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Four 6 oz. skin-on salmon fillets (preferably scaled, each about 1-inch thick)

Stir the plums, cucumber, red onion, bell pepper, cilantro, 2 tsp. of the canola oil, the vinegar, ¼ tsp. salt, and

⅛ tsp. pepper in a medium bowl. Set aside at room temperature.

Season both sides of the salmon with ½ tsp. salt and ⅛ tsp. pepper. Heat the remaining 2 tsp. canola oil in a 12-inch skillet over high heat. Swirl to coat the pan. When the oil is shimmering hot, add the fillets skin side down and cook without moving for 30 seconds. Reduce the heat to medium high and continue to cook until the skin is well browned and the sides of the fillets are opaque about halfway up, 2 to 4 minutes. Turn the salmon and cook, without moving, until the fillets are slightly firm to the touch, 3 to 4 minutes more. Serve skin side up with the salad.



Romaine, Bacon & Tomato Salad with Croutons & Tarragon Vinaigrette

Serves four.

Romaine lends a crisp texture to this salad, but it's equally tasty with small leaves of butter lettuce.

5 slices thick-cut bacon, cut crosswise into 1-inch pieces
3 Tbs. olive oil
2 cups 1-inch-square bread cubes (cut from ½-inch-thick slices of sturdy bread)
1 large clove garlic
Kosher salt
1 small shallot, thinly sliced
¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 tsp. tarragon vinegar or other white-wine vinegar
Freshly ground black pepper
2 romaine lettuce hearts, sliced crosswise into 1-inch pieces, washed, and spun dry (about 6 lightly packed cups)
1 cup grape or cherry tomatoes, halved

Cook the bacon over medium heat in a 12-inch nonstick skillet, stirring frequently until crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a plate lined with paper towels.

Pour off and discard the bacon fat from the skillet. Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in the skillet over medium heat. Add the bread and cook, stirring, for 5 to 7 minutes, until crisp on the outside and lightly browned. Transfer to the plate with the bacon to cool.

Coarsely chop the garlic and sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt. Using the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste.

Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. oil in the skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic paste and the shallot and cook, stirring, just until the garlic is fragrant and the shallot softens a bit, 30 seconds; don't let the garlic brown. Transfer to a large bowl, add the parsley, vinegar, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper and stir until well combined.

Add the romaine and tomatoes to the bowl and toss with the dressing. Add the bacon and croutons, season to taste with more salt, and toss again. Serve immediately.



Summer Vegetable Soup with Dill

Serves eight as a first course.

If you have sweet, tender farm-fresh corn, use it raw. If your corn is a little starchy, blanch the ears in boiling water before cutting off the kernels.

3 cups buttermilk, chilled and well shaken
1 cup plain Greek yogurt, chilled
2 cups seeded medium-diced ripe tomatoes
2 cups fresh corn kernels
½ cup small-diced fresh fennel, plus chopped fronds if available
½ cup peeled, seeded, and small-diced cucumber
3 Tbs. finely chopped fresh dill; more for garnish
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Whisk the buttermilk and yogurt in a large bowl. Stir in the tomatoes, corn, fennel, cucumber, dill, 1 tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Season to taste with more salt and pepper. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 24 hours.

Serve the soup in chilled bowls, garnished with dill.

variation:

Try adding other herbs to the soup—basil or flat-leaf parsley would be particularly nice.



Grilled Skirt Steak with Quick Romesco Sauce

Serves four.

1¼ to 1½ lb. skirt steak, trimmed
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 thin slice white sandwich bread, darkly toasted
2 Tbs. toasted sliced almonds
7.5-oz. jar roasted red peppers, drained (¾ cup)
1 tsp. sherry vinegar
⅛ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
2 medium cloves garlic
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ tsp. smoked sweet paprika or plain sweet paprika

Prepare a medium-high grill fire. If you have one large piece of skirt steak, cut it crosswise, separating the thicker part from the thinner. Season the steak on both sides with salt and pepper.

Tear the bread into large pieces, put in a food processor, and process to fine crumbs. Add the almonds and process until coarsely ground. Add the roasted red peppers, vinegar, and pepper flakes and process until the mixture is fairly smooth, about 1 minute.

Chop the garlic and sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt. Using the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste. In a 10-inch skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the garlic paste and paprika and cook, stirring, until the garlic is fragrant but not browned, 20 to 30 seconds. Add the pepper mixture and cook, stirring, until heated through and thickened slightly, about 2 minutes. Set aside at room temperature.

Grill the steak, covered, turning occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part reaches 130°F for medium rare or 140°F for medium, 4 to 8 minutes. (The thinner pieces will take less time. Be careful—overcooked skirt steak is tough.) Move the steak to a cutting board and let rest for 3 minutes. Cut each piece crosswise into 4- to 6-inch-long pieces and then, holding your knife at a slight angle, cut each piece across the grain into thin slices.

Serve with the sauce.



Vietnamese-Style Chicken Salad

Serves four.

If you don't have a grill, you can cook the chicken indoors on a ridged grill pan over medium-high heat for the same amount of time.

3 small shallots, coarsely chopped (½ cup)
1 jalapeño, chopped (seed first if you want less heat)
1 Tbs. granulated sugar
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup rice vinegar
3 Tbs. fish sauce
1 lb. boneless, skinless, thin-sliced (¼ to ½ inch thick) chicken breast cutlets
Kosher salt
6 oz. package coleslaw mix
1 cup fresh mint leaves, torn if large
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves
¼ cup salted peanuts, coarsely chopped

Prepare a medium grill fire.

With a mortar and pestle, pound the shallots, jalapeño, sugar, and ⅛ tsp. pepper until the shallots are very soft (but not puréed) and liquid is released. Transfer to a large serving bowl and stir in the vinegar and fish sauce.

Season the chicken with ¼ tsp. salt and ⅛ tsp. pepper and grill, turning once, until just cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Let cool and then shred the chicken with your fingers into long thin strips, pulling the meat along its natural grain.

Toss the coleslaw mix into the vinegar mixture. Add the chicken, mint, and cilantro and combine well. Top with the peanuts and serve at room temperature.



Grilled Lamb Chops with Fresh Herb & Feta Salad

Serves four.

Use small herb leaves if you can—they're likely to have a more pleasant texture and flavor than large leaves.

Eight 4-oz. lamb loin chops (each 1¼ inches thick)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 small shallot, minced
1 ripe medium tomato, seeded and medium diced
5 small radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced
4 cups loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
1 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves
1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
¼ cup crumbled feta

Prepare a medium-high grill fire. Season the lamb chops generously on both sides with salt and pepper.

In a large bowl, whisk the olive oil, lemon juice, shallot, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper. Stir in the tomato and radishes. Lay the parsley, mint, and basil on top, tearing any large leaves into several smaller pieces as you go. Put the feta on top of the herbs.

Grill the lamb chops, covered, turning frequently, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center reads 130°F for medium rare or 140°F for medium, 10 to 14 minutes.

Toss the salad well and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve the chops with the salad on the side.



Linguine with Roasted Red Peppers, Tomatoes & Toasted Breadcrumbs

Serves four.

Toasted breadcrumbs are quick to make and add a nice crunchy element to this dish.

Kosher salt
1 medium clove garlic
12-oz. jar roasted red peppers, drained and cut into 1/4-inch dice (about 1 cup)
1 cup small grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
1/2 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
4 1/2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. capers, rinsed and chopped
1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs, preferably whole wheat
12 oz. dried linguine or spaghetti
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano; more for serving

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, coarsely chop the garlic. Sprinkle it with 1/2 tsp. salt and using the flat

side of a chef's knife mash it to a paste.

In a large bowl, stir the garlic paste, roasted peppers, tomatoes, parsley, 3 Tbs. of the oil, the capers, and the pepper flakes.

Heat the remaining 1 1/2 Tbs. oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the breadcrumbs and toast, stirring frequently, until the smaller crumbs are golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate and sprinkle with salt.

Cook the linguine in the boiling water according to package directions until al dente. Reserve about 1/4 cup of the pasta water and drain the pasta in a colander. Add the hot pasta to the red pepper mixture, toss to combine, and add just enough of the reserved pasta water to moisten (you won't need it all). Add the cheese, toss well, and season to taste with salt. Serve topped with the breadcrumbs and additional cheese.



Shrimp Salad Rolls with Tarragon & Chives

Serves six.

Full of bright flavors, the shrimp salad is delicious on its own, too. If you're really in a hurry, you can use precooked shrimp.

Kosher salt
2 lb. large shrimp (31 to 40 per lb.), preferably easy-peel
3/4 cup finely chopped celery with leaves
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh chives
1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh tarragon
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper
6 hot dog rolls, preferably New England-style split-top rolls

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring, until bright pink and cooked through, about 2 minutes—the water needn't return to a boil. Drain

in a colander and run under cold water to stop the cooking. Shell the shrimp, devein if necessary, and cut into 1/2- to 3/4-inch pieces.

In a large bowl, stir the celery, mayonnaise, chives, tarragon, lemon juice, 1/4 tsp. salt, and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Stir in the shrimp and season to taste with more lemon, salt, and pepper.

Position a rack 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler to high. Toast both outside surfaces of the rolls under the broiler, about 1 minute per side. Spoon the shrimp salad into the rolls, using about 2/3 cup per roll, and serve.

Note: The shrimp salad will keep for up to 2 days, covered, in the refrigerator.

lobster roll variation:
 Substitute 1 1/2 lb. (4 cups) cooked lobster meat for the cooked shrimp.

Recipes by Lori Longbotham, whose most recent cookbook is Luscious Creamy Desserts. ♦